THE CULTURAL LIVES OF DOMESTIC OBJECTS
IN
LATE ANTIQUITY

by
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates evidence for the cultural lives of domestic objects in Late Antiquity. As such, it focuses on objects as meaningful possessions, rather than their practical, utilitarian functions. In particular, this research seeks to reveal the personal meaning for domestic possessions and their sentimental, as opposed to economic, value. This is something that has either been ignored or mentioned only in passing and without further qualification in existing studies of late antique material culture.

This research is underpinned by specific theoretical approaches from the disciplines of archaeology, art history and anthropology. Object biography, or the understanding that events in the lives of objects can affect their meaning and value, is key to this investigation and provides the opportunity to approach the material evidence in a novel way. It allows the direct comparison of previously disparate textual and archaeological sources to better understand the relationships between people and their possessions across a broad social spectrum. It also governs the structure of the thesis, which has chapters on heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs – all of which are defined by an element of their biography, namely the context of their acquisition. The case study chapter also examines a generally ignored artefact type – the basket – bringing this undervalued example of domestic material culture to the fore.

This thesis reveals that personal domestic possessions had the capacity to function as material vehicles for intangible thoughts, memories, and relationships. This function was known and exploited by the people of Late Antiquity in order to create and possess meaningful domestic objects of various types. It provides a new interpretation of domestic material culture that is different to more traditional studies of economic and social status. As such, it allows an understanding of how material culture transformed dwellings into homes during this period.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an investigation of the material culture of Late Antiquity. Using specific theoretical approaches, it assesses the evidence for objects in terms of cultural and personal meaning. By identifying such values, this thesis hopes to illuminate the relationship between people and their possessions in this period, thus providing a more rounded view of domestic material culture and the late antique home.

Late Antiquity, a period spanning from approximately AD 250 to AD 800, represents a time of distinct cultural significance, forming the legacy of the Roman Empire and the precursor to the medieval period.[1] Contemporary scholarship is often conducted in reaction to the traditional and pervasive view, instigated by Edward Gibbon in the eighteenth century, of Late Antiquity as an era of decline accompanying the fall of the Roman Empire, which he considered the pinnacle of civilisation.[2] In seeking to redress this balance, research on late antique material culture is often focused on the role of objects as signifiers of political, economic, and social status as well as religious identity. For example, the wide-ranging catalogue by Weitzmann includes a section on everyday objects, however discusses them in terms of style, social status, religion, and professional industry.[3] Veyne's study of private life throughout history includes a section by Peter Brown on Late Antiquity, which similarly focuses on social status, the elites, and political and imperial control.[4] Bryan Ward-Perkins also uses material evidence to discuss late Roman trade and economy in terms of identifying a decline in standards of living.[5] A similar focus can be identified in scholarship on housing and late antique domesticity. For example, Simon Ellis' discussion of housing in the Roman period interprets the material evidence in terms of the domestic display of

[1] Bowersock, *et al* (1999) ix.
[2] Gibbon (1826). It should be noted that late antique material culture is often described in scholarship variously as late Roman, Coptic, early Byzantine, or even early Medieval, depending on the exact date, geographical location of the item in question, and the preferences of the writer. In this thesis, the term late Roman is used to refer to the period immediately before Late Antiquity, roughly the first to mid-third centuries AD; Byzantine is used to describe the period overlapping with the end of Late Antiquity and beyond specifically in the Greek-speaking East, approximately the fifth to fifteenth centuries AD.
[3] Weitzmann (1979) 297-349.
[4] Brown (1987).
[5] Ward-Perkins (2005).

social status and material wealth.[6] This focus within contemporary research reflects a desire to provide a more nuanced understanding of the period, and is thus preoccupied with identifying changes in security, quality of living, and religious belief, that relate to the consequences of the social transformations of Late Antiquity.

However, this nonetheless still provides a narrow way to view domestic possessions; it does not reflect fully the reality of relationships between objects and their owners, the way in which they were valued and understood, and the integration of domestic material culture into everyday life. As in any period, the material culture of Late Antiquity had the potential to reflect more personal and thus cultural meanings. This thesis aims to provide a new analysis of personal domestic objects and these meanings. Specifically, it seeks to identify the kinds of objects that were meaningful possessions, how and why this meaning was created, and how this intersected with late antique daily life more broadly. As such this work will strive to provide a fuller and more progressive view of late antique domestic material culture.

Of course, these kinds of meanings are difficult to identify within the available evidence and are often highly subjective, in part explaining the absence of such perspectives from general scholarship on the period. However, certain theoretical approaches can aid such an investigation. This piece of research is underpinned by the theory of object biography, which acknowledges that objects have lives during which events occur that create and affect meaning.[7] By taking such a perspective, the integration of objects into the lives of their owners and society more broadly can be identified and assessed.

The research that forms this thesis contributes to the Leverhulme-funded Visualising the Late Antique City project based at the University of Kent; the broad aims of this project are to recreate the appearance, atmosphere and experience of daily life in late antique cities. The work undertaken here therefore represents the acknowledgment of the importance of personal domestic possessions in the everyday lives of people. Furthermore it highlights the multiple layers of significance that

[6] Ellis (2000).
[7] See chapter 2, section II of this thesis.

such items had the potential to hold. In addition, this work looks for meanings and values that were not specific to social status. This provides the opportunity to identify and discuss significant objects beyond the elite classes where possible. Studies of the elite have dominated scholarship, thus this thesis provides a fresh and important perspective to existing research on this period by looking at the middle and lower classes.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters. The main thematic chapters are structured around evidence for the kinds of objects that we might categorise as meaningful - namely gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs. It should be acknowledged that these are huge topics in themselves; therefore each chapter does not seek to be the final word on the relevant subject or evidence. In general the evidence collated here represents a diverse geographical spread; due to the nature of the evidence and the difficulty in identifying relevant material, there is little from one location, therefore the area of focus must be broadened. As such, it is accepted that specific conclusions related to confined geographical areas cannot be made, therefore this thesis will focus on broader but nevertheless insightful themes and trends. Chronologically, the majority of evidence discussed here comes from the first half of the late antique period, with the third to fifth centuries being well represented. Where necessary evidence from before or after that time frame has been considered as comparative or supportive evidence, to further enlighten the role of meaningful material culture in the empire over time.

Overall, the evidence is discussed in relation to the theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter 2, in order to demonstrate the value of such a scholarly perspective. It is also important for this study that heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs are discussed together. Firstly this allows comparisons to be made between types of meaningful object, and thus similarities or differences to be identified, contributing to preliminary conclusions. Also, it allows a greater consideration of the lifespans of objects during which meanings of possessions may change depending on the events with which they are involved. An object rarely has one single identity in terms of value, purpose, use, or significance during the course of its life. It also rarely embodies the same meanings, functions and

values to different people. To consider an object in such a one-dimensional manner is to ignore the reality of objects, their biographies, and relationships with people. Thus by looking at several types of meaningful object, the existence of multiple identities is acknowledged and the objects posited as dynamic rather than static in terms of their accumulation of significance.

Chapter 1 is a critique of the main types of sources used in this thesis. The difficulty in identifying personal or cultural meanings within the available evidence means that this thesis looks at a wide range of source material in order to identify and discuss the most relevant evidence. However these sources must be used critically in order to preserve the integrity of the present research. The chapter is structured around the three main types used, namely archaeology, texts and visual sources. Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical approaches used in this thesis and provides an overview and discussion of this work's conceptual perspective. It also locates this study within the broader scholarship surrounding studies of material culture. Object biography, an approach that underpins this study, as stated above, is explored as are issues relating to agency, material and sentimental value, and the making of objects. The discussion also further explores the significance of the thematic chapters of this thesis, and outlines the key theoretical work done on souvenirs, heirlooms, and gifts as object types. The chapter will then consider the appropriateness of such a theoretical approach for the period of Late Antiquity.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 represent the main thematic chapters of this present study, and deal with evidence for heirlooms, gifts and souvenirs respectively. Chapter 3 begins by discussing the specific problems and peculiarities that follow any investigations of heirloom objects, in particular in relation to the available sources of evidence. The rest of the chapter collates the evidence for heirlooms around the contexts in which meaning is created; explored first is the role of object curation within the home, before focus turns to the association of objects with specific individuals. A wide variety of objects will be considered, from figurines, to jewellery and clothing, to dining ware - incorporating both high and low status possessions where possible. The social contexts in which these objects are found, such as marriage and death, will also be discussed.

Chapter 4 assesses gifts within Late Antiquity. It is structured around gifts specifically associated with occasions such as weddings and festivals, and gifts associated with specific individuals, in particular the imperial family. The chapter will then turn to look at texts as gifts. The materiality of texts, and their nature as objects, as opposed to simply sources of recorded information, is often forgotten, and this discussion seeks to consider this sometimes overlooked aspect in relation to gift giving behaviours in Late Antiquity. Gifts represent some of the better-studied evidence in contemporary scholarship, however the study of gifts often focuses on the evidence of the elites or imperial largesse. Such evidence is included in this chapter but via the comparison to objects of lesser material value, to try to identify common themes and traits, as well as the broad spectrum of objects that were associated with gifts and their lives as domestic objects after this moment of exchange.

Chapter 5 turns to evidence for souvenir objects and begins by considering the relevance of such terminology and concepts for our period. The evidence for souvenirs is then assessed in two main sections: the first part of the chapter looks at secular souvenirs and objects that are associated with both places and events. Incorporated into this discussion is a consideration of the role food can play in evoking memories of experiences during this period, and the concept of geographically specific objects. The second part of this chapter will assess evidence for sacred souvenirs, specifically the objects taken home by pilgrims as spiritual mementoes of their travels. This is of course a huge topic, therefore for the purposes of comparison with secular souvenir evidence, the focus remains on the largely well studied and documented Christian souvenirs. A comparison between secular and sacred objects has not been made before and therefore represents a fresh approach to mementoes of this sort from the late antique period, and it is hoped that conclusions about the wider role of souvenirs within society can be drawn.

Chapter 6 takes the form of a case study looking at the evidence for one specific type of artefact, namely the basket. By doing so, the broader themes touched upon in each of the three previous thematic chapters can be applied to one discrete object group, to draw further conclusions about the creation and nature of meaningful domestic possessions. Baskets were chosen for this exercise as

there is a large and disparate body of evidence for their role within late antique everyday life, which generally speaking has been previously overlooked in scholarship. Therefore this chapter reflects a desire to assess previously understudied objects and provide new interpretations. The opportunity to look for evidence relating to a single artefact type also provides the chance to identify layers of contemporaneous meaning, or the holding of different meanings by similar objects in different contexts. The discussion begins with a consideration of the cultural lives of baskets in three specific contexts. The association of baskets with femininity and wool working will be briefly explored, before the role of baskets as pagan ritual objects is considered. The cultural context is the inclusion of baskets in decorative domestic imagery, specifically in relation to concepts of abundance, fertility and plenty. The main section of the chapter will then turn to evidence from the early Christian monks of Egypt to assess the role of baskets in light of the previous discussions of heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs.

A concluding section then completes this thesis, in which the main findings from each chapter will be reviewed. The findings will also be related to the society and culture of Late Antiquity more broadly, in order to identify significant trends and patterns, or anomalies and changes over time in terms of life and material culture in this period. Unifying topics and themes that link the main thematic chapters together will also be discussed. Finally, the research represented by this thesis is used within a practical yet imaginative exercise – a reconstruction of a late antique home in terms of the meaningful material culture present.

CHAPTER 1: SOURCE CRITIQUE

I. INTRODUCTION

The reconstruction of domestic objects and their meanings in Late Antiquity naturally relies upon evidence that comes to modern day researchers from a variety of sources. Whilst these sources have great value in revealing meaningful objects and their role in the late antique home, to use them uncritically would undermine the foundations of the present study. All sources have value but also limitations; by identifying and discussing these limitations, their impact on the reliability of this investigation can be minimised. Maintaining this awareness will allow the evidence to speak as clearly as possible. No single source type provides the definitive evidence for the life of an object within the late antique world. Instead evidence from more than one source type must be compared and combined to try to fill the inevitable gaps. Following from Averil Cameron's statement that investigations into Late Antiquity should aim to integrate all kinds of evidence as closely as possible, this thesis strives to take a holistic approach to sources of evidence.[8] For the purposes of this chapter, the evidence types will be discussed broadly according to category – namely archaeological, visual, and textual sources.

II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

At first sight, it seems that archaeology – the material remains of the past – would be the best (or at least most direct) source of evidence for understanding material culture from the past. Certainly, every material survival to the present day represents an exciting and valuable source of evidence. However, there are also various issues relating to survival, dating, and context that need to be considered in order for the sources to be used to their full potential.

II.1. Residuality

In general terms, once an object is in the ground, there is a common assumption that it survives untouched until found by archaeologists. However, in reality it is likely to be subject to external influences (human or environmental) known as post-depositional forces. An example of a post-depositional force is that of residuality, an occurrence that can directly affect the correct

[8] Av. Cameron (2003) 12.

interpretation of artefacts.[9] Residuality is when older matter from a lower, earlier archaeological layer appears in later context.[10] Richard Reece, in his discussion of Roman coins, describes this problem, stating that even within dated contexts, coins in different layers may be mixed up, thanks to the digging of pits into earlier levels or through the actions of animals.[11] The result is that, without full consideration of post-depositional forces, residual coins can be interpreted as being in circulation during a later time than their true date of deposition. Such incorrect interpretations can also have knock-on effects, creating problems with the dating of other finds from the same archaeological layer as the residual artefacts.

The mis-identification of older objects can have a direct impact on distinguishing between objects curated, perhaps as heirlooms, and residual objects present in the archaeological record. This represents a problem of particular relevance for this study. Artefact assemblages found on sites that have been previously inhabited may well contain objects from an earlier age, as they are present from the earlier domestic structures; residual items therefore can 'contaminate' the later collection of artefacts, as well as the interpretations of their use and value. Generally speaking, without conducting primary research in the form of undertaking archaeological excavations ourselves, we are dependent upon the interpretations of others who have recorded their findings within the archaeological reports and catalogues that form the basis of many studies of material culture. For this reason, it is important to read such scholarship with a critical eye to ensure any dubious dating or interpretations can be identified. Comparisons with other similar excavation contexts can help; for example, Roman burial contexts within Britain provide useful comparisons with each other in terms of identifiable behaviours and the treatment of objects.[12] Such practice helps to create a safety net in terms of the correct dating of artefacts and the understanding of potentially residual objects present within archaeological contexts. Evaluating the evidence in this way allows the

[9] See also Evans & Millett (1992) for a discussion of the implications of this archaeological phenomenon. They observe that residuality can also provide information on a context, such as the extended use of a site or the existence of deeply buried features.
[10] The reverse occurrence also exists and should be noted here – that of intrusive objects. These are items that are entering the older levels from above, and can similarly skew results.
[11] Reece (2003) 149.
[12] See for example the potential reuse and re-interments of pottery at London's Eastern Cemetery compared with Butt Road, Colchester: Barber & Bowsher (2000) 122; Crummy *et al* (1993) 49. Also discussed in chapter 3, section II.2 of this thesis.

objective assessment of differing interpretations of similar material, and to note the variables within each site that affect our understanding of objects and the context in which they are found.

II.2. Intentional deposition

Objects enter the archaeological record either through accidental or intentional deposition. In terms of intentional deposition, there are a number of very specific archaeological contexts that have their own unique values and considerations that are relevant for this study. Hobbs highlights the distinction between the value of objects during their use life and the value that results in their burial.[13] As such intentionally deposited material should not necessarily be considered to provide an accurate reflection of their everyday use prior to deposition.

Objects found in grave contexts are artefacts deposited intentionally during the burial of the body. As such, they can represent incredibly important possessions in terms of personal value and meaning for the deceased and their immediate family, a fact that makes burial contexts a valuable source of information for this study. However, it would be uncritical to assume that the objects found within a burial represent the treasured possessions of an individual. It must be kept in mind that grave assemblages can correspond to broader cultural or social considerations such as displaying status rather than representing personal objects. Rather than representing possessions at all, grave goods might be acquired purposefully for the burial ceremony or to accompany the deceased to the afterlife, and therefore bear no resemblance to the objects used within the life of the person in the grave. Crummy, *et al,* discuss older vessels placed into graves that they interpret as objects found locally and disinterred specifically for reburial.[14] This is a factor that must be considered in light of goods found in graves, specifically in relation to the potential heirloom status of objects. For example, Eckardt and Williams discuss the phenomenon of including Roman objects within Anglo Saxon graves, often disinterred from nearby burials apparently for this purpose.[15] As such, the presence of these Roman objects within the graves represents the 'afterlife' of these objects and thus a new set of meanings and values distinct to their earlier use.[16] However,

[13] Hobbs (2007) 77.
[14] Crummy *et al* (1993) 49.
[15] Eckardt & Williams (2003).
[16] Eckardt & Williams (2003) 142-3.

there may also be a substantial gap between the acquisition of older objects and the re-interment with the newly deceased. As such, these older objects do not represent heirlooms, but nonetheless significant personal possessions that have accumulated a new set of memories and meanings with the later owner, before being reinterred in the grave.[17] As such, we can see that the relationship between the deceased and the objects accompanying them within the grave are often complex with various levels of meaning that need to be disentangled.

The other main type of intentional deposition is the hoard, a term used to describe an assemblage of objects that are buried together at the same time. Often domestic in nature, hoards thus represent a valuable source of information for this present study. Generally speaking hoards are identified as one of two main types – the hoard of valuable objects, buried for safekeeping, and the votive or religious hoard. Such distinctions are made based on the reasons why hoards of objects were assembled and deposited, however such interpretations can be difficult to make. As such, problems can arise relating to how understand these assemblages and the objects they include.

Votive hoards, such as the Modena well hoards discussed by Gelichi, represent objects interred as religious gifts and offerings.[18] However the interpretation of votive assemblages as hoards – that is, a set of related objects buried at the same moment – has been questioned. Aitchison highlights the fact that votive 'hoards' often instead represent accumulations of material that have built up over time.[19] Therefore the objects within them are not necessarily related to one another in terms of ownership. Instead the artefacts can represent a variety of owners and deposition over an extended period of time. In such circumstances significance can however be assigned to the location of the hoard as the focus of repeated ritual activity. Ritual deposition is often considered to be associated with pagan belief systems. Yet, often the circumstances are not so easy to define. Petts in his study of Christianity in Roman Britain notes that the Risley Park Lanx depicts a boar hunt and shepherding scenes that suggest pagan identity, but that it also features an inscription identifying it

[17] Eckardt & Williams (2003) 161.
[18] Gelichi (2007) 363-384.
[19] Aitchison (1988) 275. This is also discussed by Hill (1995).

as a gift from a Christian bishop.[20] Furthermore, there is also evidence for the votive burial of Christian liturgical equipment in the form of the Water Newton treasure.[21]

Hoards of material buried for safekeeping suggest that they contain material of some sort of worth, and that they were to be retrieved at a later point; this can be identified through the careful wrapping and evidence of packing materials, such as that on the Mildenhall Treasure.[22] In fact, many scholarly discussions surrounding hoards and these various factors relate to the value of the objects.[23] However, there is more than one type of value, and hoard artefacts can represent sentimental as well as economic value.[24] Millett challenges the assumption that hoards naturally represent objects of economic value; furthermore Reece points out that many potential hoards of low value material such as bone or ceramic are instead interpreted as rubbish deposits.[25] In addition hoards of valuable objects do not necessarily also have a corresponding personal value – for example the Thetford Treasure represents jewellery collected together by a craftsperson for recycling rather than valuables of an individual or family.[26] Therefore, to imply that the objects within a hoard represent treasured possessions would be to take a deeply uncritical view of the evidence.

It must also be remembered that the context of a hoard's deposition reflects only a moment in time, and the reasons for the burial of an object do not necessarily tell us about the life of the object up to that point. However, there are useful ways in which we can think about such objects. The presence of older artefacts within hoards (excluding those accumulated assemblages mentioned above) is first of all unlikely to represent residuality as the hoard forms a closed context and thus one date for the deposition. Their presence accordingly suggests curation over a period of time prior to burial. The reasons for this curation could well be related to personal scales of meaning and value that

[20] Petts (2003) 118. The inscription reads: Exuperius episcopus ec[c]lesiae Bogiensi dedit / "Bishop Exuperius gives this to the church of Bogiensi".
[21] Petts (2003) 124-5; Painter (1977).
[22] Hobbs (2007) 81.
[23] See for example Aitchison (1988) on the value of coin hoards.
[24] Interestingly, Hobbs disregards the importance of sentimental value stating it to be subjective and only pertinent to the owners of the objects: Hobbs (2007) 81. However Millett correctly identifies the importance of considering these "more nebulous values" when assessing the significance of hoards: Millett (1994) 100.
[25] Millett (1994); Reece (1988) 262. See also Hobbs (2007).
[26] Johns & Potter (1983).

differ significantly from the reason for their ultimate collection and burial. For example, the burial of an older metal object as part of an economic hoard suggests predominantly bullion value, however prior to that event their survival could well be for sentimental or other reasons. Hoarded objects might also represent a range of meanings, demonstrating the desire to preserve objects as a group, but not necessarily always for the same individual purposes. The researcher must look for other clues in terms of dating, conditions of artefacts and the group as a whole.[27] These extra details are important but sometimes unfortunately lacking due to the practices involved during a hoard's excavation. Antiquarian hoards in particular can suffer from poor record keeping, leaving little or no data to us today on the conditions of their discovery. This is also true of hoards found in dubious circumstances or outside of an archaeological project. Such an example is the Sevso treasure, which appeared without warning on the art market in 1980 and has no known provenance.[28] Whilst it is now thought to come from Hungary due to a geographical reference on the famous Hunting Plate – a lake is labelled as "Pelso", the Roman name for the modern Lake Balaton - without specific information surrounding the treasure's findspot, or knowledge over whether the items existing to us today form the complete collection, we lose what little reliable context the hoard had in the first place, making it more difficult to ascertain who the owners, in broad terms, might have been. In such situations we are reliant upon the objects themselves for information, through artefactual analysis, and through comparison with other objects or hoards found elsewhere.

II.3. Materials and Issues of Preservation

Something that has a huge effect on our understanding of late antique material culture is the preservation, or otherwise, of objects from that period within the archaeological record. Depending upon the conditions and the material nature of the object, not all artefacts deposited in the ground will survive. The result is that we cannot read too much into the absence of certain items within the archaeological record. For example, the Modena well hoards contain wooden objects, which were not found in similar assemblages elsewhere.[29] However, rather than representing a scarcity in terms

[27] For further discussion of the implications of using hoard evidence in relation to heirlooms, see chapter 3, sections I.1 & I.2.
[28] Mundell Mango and Bennett (1994) 11.
[29] Gelichi (2007) 378.

of wooden objects, or a special function in relation to hoarding behaviour, their presence in the wells is due to differential conditions which ensured the objects' preservation.[30] This point can be extrapolated to include a broad range of objects made of organic materials that are now often missing from the record – objects such as baskets, wooden vessels, and textiles. Distribution patterns for these objects can in some ways tell us more about geographical conditions or soil types than the locations in which these objects existed. For example, baskets (discussed chapter 6 of this thesis) are by their nature made from an organic and thus perishable material; therefore the majority of surviving examples come from late antique Egypt and surrounding regions where the climate is hot and dry, and the ground sandy. However, this does not mean that baskets only existed in this region; textual and visual sources show that baskets were present across the Empire and unlikely survivals, for example in waterlogged conditions from Northern Europe, give us a good idea of the scale of absence in archaeological terms.

A similar problem is posed by the presence of papyri. Papyrological sources, used extensively in this thesis, represent a valuable source of documentary information in the form of private letters, legal contracts, miscellaneous inventories, and other documents. They provide a glimpse of material culture that is difficult to find in other sources. However, the nature of papyri as a plant based material means that it only survives in very specific conditions; in fact, the rubbish heaps into which many were dumped in Egypt protected the documents over the intervening centuries and provided the ideal conditions for the preservations of papyrus.[31] For this reason, the majority of papyri come from a specific region of the ancient world. This presents us with a problem in terms of how applicable the evidence provided by papyrological sources is with regards to the rest of the empire in Late Antiquity (although it is arguable that this is a problem for many type of evidence). This specificity in terms of location needs to be kept in mind when drawing conclusions, with reference to other analogous sources of evidence where possible to remove as far as possible anomalous interpretations that can arise. As such, where possible, comparisons in terms of general trends or broader behaviours will be made in order to identify common practices that occurred throughout the Empire.

[30] Gelichi (2007) 379.
[31] Frösén (2009) 79–80.

In terms of the materials from which specific objects are made, their survival can also be explained by a similar sense of fragility and problems with preservation. Objects made of materials such as glass do not significantly degrade but can however be easily broken, and thus may only survive to the present day in fragmentary form. Furthermore glass and metals can also be recycled. As such, there might be absences within the record as items made from these materials are melted down for the production of other objects. This might well explain the absence of imperial gifts in glass and other materials that, from rare survivals, are known to have existed but are largely absent from the archaeological record.[32] The destruction of objects can also occur after the late antique period, post-excavation. This is certainly true for some of the treasures found within Rome – many of the objects discovered within the tomb of Maria, wife of Honorius, no longer survive to us today as they were melted down by the Papacy during the Renaissance, removing for us a fantastic source on gifts and heirloom jewellery.[33] As such, we must often rely on descriptions from textual sources or excavation reports when the objects themselves are no longer available. Furthermore, it underlines for the modern researcher not only problems with the preservation of objects but also problems with overall survival, reinforcing the adage that the absence of evidence is not itself the evidence of absence.

II.4. Records and Publication

The nature of archaeology and material survivals means that modern research is never based upon the full extent of material culture that existed in the past. As Grünbart and Stathakopoulos discuss, scholars can only base their research on the information accessible to them – in other words through the preserved, published, and otherwise known artefacts at their disposal.[34] As such, these items often represent possessions of the elites as they are the artefacts most often preserved and displayed within collections and archives, and thus available for study.[35]

[32] Oliver (1975) 68-70.
[33] Lanciani (1892) 203-205. This evidence is discussed in reference to gifts in chapter 3, section III.2, of this thesis.
[34] Grünbart & Stathakopoulos (2002) 300.
[35] Grünbart & Stathakopoulos (2002) 300.

Furthermore, when using archaeological sources, we are in general reliant upon the records and thus interpretations of others. An initial misinterpretation of data can lead to the wrong classification of an object, making finding specific evidence in the publications of work a struggle, or at the very least providing misleading results. Such problems have been discussed by Penelope Allison who addresses the implications of assigning a label because of physical form, and therefore inherently implying a function for objects from a domestic archaeological context.[36] A specific example is the classification of small, narrow pottery vessels, found at Pompeii, as *fritilli*. This term is a classical word suggesting their use as a dice thrower, however some have been found to contain the traces of paint suggesting their function was not necessarily confined to gaming, if directly associated with it at all.[37] To consider them as primarily or exclusively associated with this function is the result of their original interpretation and classification.

Reports and catalogues of significant age can also be less reliable in terms of the information that they provide. The incorrect dating of artefacts is a particular danger, especially if based upon style, as often the objects that form the basis of these interpretations have been reassessed in the intervening years. Such new information can affect the attributions in both terms of date and other information in older reports. Therefore the most up to date publications should be consulted where possible. Furthermore, the evidence presented within older reports or catalogues can lack detail, especially in relation to smaller miscellaneous finds. For example, older publications of papyri collections often do not include the translations or even transcriptions in the original language for documents considered unimportant or of minor interest. In such cases, the only remit is to consult the primary material evidence itself, an option that is not always practical depending on the preservation status and accessibility of the artefacts. In terms of this study, many documentary texts that have potentially relevant information within them could not be consulted as either the original texts or translations had not yet been published in full. Whilst there have been huge leaps forward in the accessibility of papyrological sources (see for example the online open access databases such as papyri.info) there are still barriers to interdisciplinary study which make difficult the use of such

[36] Allison (1999) 57-77.
[37] Allison (1999) 62-63.

sources to those who lack experience working within the conventions of papyrology.[38] Of course, the size of the available evidence should also be noted – 79 volumes of papyri from Oxyrhynchus excavations alone have been published up to 2014 – and the benefit of this is that there is great potential for further study using sources of this kind to assess meaningful objects in Late Antiquity.

III. VISUAL SOURCES

Visual sources are used extensively in this thesis, and provide a valuable perspective on the lives of objects in Late Antiquity. What seems the most obvious form of information provided by images for the study of material culture is the appearance of objects. However, using visual sources in this way should be treated with caution. It can be difficult to rely solely on pictorial evidence for the reconstruction of unknown or unpreserved objects, as the images can be subject to anachronism, imitations of stereotypes or artistic invention.[39] For example, the illustrations in the Roman Virgil manuscript are thought to be copied from a much older model, possibly a papyrus roll, meaning the iconography it uses is taken from that rather than everyday contemporary life.[40] Similarly, other scenes or iconographic motifs may in fact be referring to an earlier image, drawing upon existing iconographic formulae, or a particular pattern book.[41] As such, the images may not reflect contemporary society, and therefore contemporary material culture, but rather function to communicate ideas surrounding identity, education and social heritage.

Following on from this, it must therefore be acknowledged that late antique images were not produced as pieces of evidence for modern day researchers – they are products of a society in which they had specific uses, meanings and values. Therefore the anticipated audience of such visual sources needs to be considered, in order to assess how this information might affect our interpretations. As discussed above, many images were intended to function as referents of social status, or to reflect aspects of the owner's character, rather than represent the realism of daily life and material culture. For example, Katherine Dunbabin's survey of the images of slaves within

[38] Publications such as *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, and Pestman's *The New Papyrological Primer* are helping to change this. See Bagnall (2009); Pestman (1994).
[39] Grünbart & Stathakopoulos (2002) 303.
[40] Wright (2001) 14.
[41] For example, the scenes of Jonah reclining under the gourd tree often found on early Christian sarcophagi are derived from classical images of Endymion. See for example the sarcophagus now in the British Museum, dating to AD 260-300 (1957.1011.1).

visual depictions provides a range of sources for which images of domestic objects can be found.[42] These include sarcophagi and tomb paintings, the wall paintings and mosaics of household interiors, and imagery on other various objects. A particular example is the wall painting in the Schola Praeconum, from the Palatine in Rome, which includes depictions of various objects including a flywhisk and box for perfumes.[43] These sources are of course invaluable when trying to reconstruct the lives of domestic objects. The limitation of such a source, however, is the range of society that the image can be used as evidence for. In the images that Dunbabin discusses, servants are used to promote a sense of wealth and importance for the owner and as a result the items the figures hold can be expected to represent the domestic objects of the elite.[44] It is unlikely to find a mosaic figure holding an object that represented the poorest classes; firstly, such interior decoration could only have been afforded by a certain section of society, and secondly they would then use it to communicate their lofty status to the viewer. Many of the images available to us, for example illuminations within manuscripts, similarly disproportionately represent the objects of the elite; to commission such items represents a significant economic outlay, and also status and prestige. As a result, the images we use as evidence cannot be applied to the whole of late antique society without qualification or the support of further evidence from other sources. However, it is fair to say that the elite classes, and ultimately the imperial family, often led fashions. Objects that they owned and treasured, for whatever reason, would often influence the styles of objects used in the rest of society. There are examples of expensive domestic objects being replicated in cheaper or lower quality materials for purchase by those of lesser economic means. For example, some of the 'Balkan' type of terracotta lamps found on the seventh-century Yassi Ada shipwreck are very similar in style to bronze lamps of the same period.[45] The terracotta versions would be much cheaper to produce and purchase, allowing a wider section of society to own similar-looking objects and thereby participate in the same fashions.

Often depictions of objects are useful in showing their appearance but they can also suffer from lack of details or schematic appearances that remove the realism of their form. As such they are not

[42] Dunbabin (2003a).
[43] Dunbabin (2003a) 447.
[44] Dunbabin (2003a) 444.
[45] Vitelli (1982) 196-7.

necessarily reliable in terms of describing what objects actually looked like. This can often be seen in the visual representations of baskets, which are often highly stylised and recognisable, but as such not realistic. They are instead iconic representations, often featuring crude crosshatching to connote the woven textures of the object.[46] However, in terms of the absence of these objects from the archaeological record, such images represent important evidence. As mentioned above, the distribution of certain objects, such as baskets, is skewed because of problems of survival; however images can be found in a variety of media from regions where this material evidence is lacking. Similarly, visual sources can provide information on the geographical and chronological spread of specific objects; the *maniaces* necklace discussed in chapter 3 is known from an early textual reference by Polybius, however its continued presence in late antique society is reinforced by visual representations in the form of mummy portraits from Egypt and the mosaics from San Vitale, Ravenna (figs. 14 and 16). As such, images can be seen to record the presence of objects that in themselves might not be so prominent in everyday consciousness to guarantee their inclusion within textual sources.

Furthermore, visual sources can also provide information on behaviours associated with objects, as well as simply their presence or appearance. Often these are aspects of material culture that cannot easily be identified within material remains. Again, this point can be illustrated by evidence for baskets, images of which demonstrate their presence in a variety of contexts and in a variety of uses. Textiles, which also survive only in very specific environmental conditions, can also be found in visual sources – either in the wearing of clothing, or the arrangement of interior furnishings, such as in the processional mosaics in San Vitale, Ravenna. Similarly, late antique furniture and its specific uses in everyday life can also be identified in images, such as the Yakto mosaic from Antioch, which represents a variety of material culture involved in everyday activities.

However, there are also problems in terms of our own interpretations of images. The use of specific iconography might lead to an incorrect interpretation of function or purpose, especially in terms images used to decorate objects. For example, chapter 4 features a discussion of imagery that often

[46] See, for example, the stylised basket depicted on the late sixth-century weight, now held in the British Museum (1980,0601.24).

features a couple in profile or head on portrait; this has been given the name of 'marriage' iconography. Whilst it certainly seems to allude to the union between a man and a woman, to identify all objects featuring this imagery as explicitly associated with the event of marriage would be shortsighted. The presence of such an image does not automatically prove that this was how objects were used and understood, even if this was the intention of the creator or owner. However, through reference to other sources of evidence, visual sources can be given more nuanced interpretations that serve the aims of this piece of research more fully.

IV. TEXTUAL SOURCES

The final type of source to be discussed in relation to the present study is textual sources. They can describe the uses and contexts in which objects could be found in the late antique period, thus providing information that might be absent from other evidence. As such they represent a valuable source for this current study and are used extensively. Texts come to us in two main categories – literary and documentary texts. Literary texts represent a type of writing in which the style used is as important as the contents; their reading is thus for enjoyment as well as information and the potential audience for such writings broad. Documentary texts in contrast function to predominantly communicate or record specific information, often only for a small number of people and as such are often ephemeral. Once their specific function is fulfilled, the document can have little value.

IV.1. Literary texts

Literary texts from the late antique period encompass a broad number of writing types, including histories, poetry, and fictional prose narratives. As such they can provide important details on objects in terms of their appearance, use, and social meaning. However, such sources must be read critically. The purpose of a literary text is rarely to faithfully describe objects or behaviours, but rather to entertain and reflect the values or motives of the author. For example, as a type of rhetoric, *ekphrasis* appears as a descriptive form of literary text that addresses material objects and architecture, however it functions to showcase the writing prowess of the author, rather than provide a faithful description of the object or building in question. Its overarching aim is, as Ruth

Webb and Liz James explain, to create an impression on the audience, thereby making the experience of viewing the artwork or architecture available to those reading or listening.[47] This emphasis on personal experience in *ekphrastic* texts means they are not always reliable as factual descriptions, as the author's intent is to create an impressive and literary account that has a specific effect on the listener or reader.

The motives of the author should also be kept in mind with reference to historical texts, which narrate the events relating to the reigns of successive emperors. For example, the Chronicle of John Malalas provides valuable details on the giving and receiving of gifts, since they often functioned within diplomatic acts. However, the details within such narratives often require qualification and critical reading. Descriptions provided do not always refer to the contemporary experiences of the author, reducing their reliability. The Chronicle of John Malalas covered history until AD 527, and was completed in around AD 570; however it was largely copied from the works of earlier writers, such as the Greek Domninus who worked in the mid-fifth century.[48] As a source, its reliance and imitation of earlier work must be taken into account; patterns of text, specific details, anecdotes and biases may be taken from the earlier authors and therefore such information may be unreliable. Similarly, the fourth-century writer Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* is incomplete to us today, but originally spanned 372 years, beginning with the accession of Nerva in AD 96.[49] Therefore the areas of description that are beyond Ammianus' own lifespan should be treated with caution, as he did not witness them first hand and therefore much of what he reports may be inaccurate or purely conjecture. Furthermore, literary texts may function to refer to the classicising traditions of earlier literature and aim to mimic specific styles of writing, rather than communicate accurate details. Again, Ammianus Marcellinus looked back to the classical literature of the Greek and Roman Empire, and was representative of the practice of late antique authors drawing upon the styles of language and methods of literary construction to create their own works, thus revealing their own high standard of education.[50]

[47] James & Webb (1991) 6.
[48] Jeffreys (2006) 129.
[49] Rohrbacher (2002) 20-21. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*; trans. Rolfe (1935).
[50] Rohrbacher (2002) 11.

Early Christian texts also provide a wealth of information on the lives of people and their possessions in late antique society, but similarly also contain specific biases. For example, the sermons of St. John Chrysostom preach the morals of Christianity and are therefore didactic in nature; they often describe what people should do, rather than the reality of everyday life. They also tend to caricature people or practices that go against these morals. However, the intended audience for such works, which were often read aloud as public speeches, was broad and as such the works often contain details pertaining to everyday life that gave the audience member something to recognise and relate to. Therefore, the descriptions of gold and ivory couches, and other luxury furnishings, in elite homes provided by John Chrysostom might be exaggerated to make his point, however likely contains realistic details in terms of the appearance and fashions of the time.[51] If this feature were not true, then the persuasive element of his writing would be ineffectual as the reader or listener would not recognise the problems he was discussing. Thus, such sources can provide valuable details on the objects, their context and surrounding behaviours, if read with a critical eye.

The way in which texts are transmitted from the late antique period to us in the modern day must also be considered when using literary sources as evidence. The majority of texts are copies of manuscripts made and recopied over centuries, thereby making the chances of the inclusion of errors high. The problems associated with the copying of manuscripts are shown in the letter of Sidonius Apollinaris, who describes the transcribing of Philostratus' *Life* as involving at least three different people, including himself; the rush to rewrite the manuscript results in him improvising and producing a poor translation.[52] The unreliability of such practices means there is no guarantee that the copy that Sidonius produced was in any way faithful or complete.[53] Thus, there is always the likelihood that texts transmitted from the late antique period reach us in an altered form due to the practices employed in their copying and distribution. Other texts used in this thesis have their origins in different forms of communication. The *Apophthegmata Patrum,* or the 'Sayings of the Desert Fathers' were originally, as the title implies, oral histories from the late antique period, written down many years after their original inception. As such they are incredibly likely to have

[51] John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 83.4; trans. Prevost (1888).
[52] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, 8.3; trans. Anderson (1965).
[53] Jones (2006) 59.

varied from their original form, and represent more stereotypes of monastic life rather than an accurate contemporary record. Furthermore, the texts also function to emphasise the lifestyle of the monastic brethren and the values in which they embodied. As such, the texts can, as Rubenson states, be read as forming a founding philosophy for early Christian monasticism, rather than historical detail of the period.[54] However, like the works of John Chrysostom, such persuasive writing is likely to still contain elements of truth, so that the lifestyle is recognisable. Furthermore, the location-specific nature of the descriptions means that evidence can therefore be compared to archaeology from monastic sites.[55]

As scholars using literary texts, we can try to manage these limitations in the source material by using trusted editions and translations of the original works. The Loeb Classical Library generally provides the most reliable and accessible versions of the main classical and late antique texts. Wherever possible, reliable original language versions of texts have also been referenced, in order to create an open and transparent context for the interpretation of texts. By doing so, it is possible to trace the lineage of a translation and thereby hope to limit errors or inconsistencies. Key phrases where wording is especially important have also been double checked by experts in the relevant language.

IV.2. Documentary texts

In contrast to literary texts are documentary texts, which generally fulfil a different function to the former, working to record and communicate information on a more personal and private scale, and thus are often only relevant to a small number of people. They come to us in the form of accounts, letters, legal documents and inventories, amongst others, and often contain information that is hard to find in other sources.[56]

[54] Rubenson (2012) 499.
[55] See chapter 6, section III.1.
[56] Bagnall (2011) discusses the significance of late antique documentary texts in his book *Everyday writing in the Graeco-Roman East.*

Papyrological sources form the large majority of documentary texts, and have already been discussed in relation to problems with the survival of papyrus as a material.[57] However, everyday writing is also present in other forms: wooden writing tablets, for which excavations at Vindolanda provide excellent surviving examples, and also *ostraca* provide further sources of ephemeral documentation.[58] However, as discussed in relation to archaeological publications above, not all the relevant material is available. Generally speaking, publications of Greek papyrological texts outweigh those of Coptic or other dialects, which reflects the dominant tastes and preferences of editors and papyrologists; furthermore literary texts have been traditionally favoured over documentary, with preference going to examples that have published parallels.[59] As such not all excavated textual material is equally represented within the body of published works.

In addition, the dating of these kinds of texts are often made on palaeographic grounds – in other words, based on the changes in handwriting over time through comparisons with more firmly dated examples of handwritten text.[60] As with the stylistic dating of artefacts, the reliability and accuracy of such dating techniques can be weak; assigned dates are usually very broad and can be inaccurate due to individual differences in handwriting, regional variation, and questionable dating of the comparative sources.[61] For this reason, a broad approach has been taken to the documentary sources in this thesis, to ensure that all relevant material is considered regardless of potentially erroneous dating. Furthermore, the source texts are used in combination with other relevant evidence such as literary texts and archaeological information.[62] The incorrect dating of documents can have a direct effect on the interpretation of texts as heirlooms within family archives – an issue discussed in chapter 3, section III.5 of this thesis. Archives of documentary texts represent the curation of documents over a long period, often across generations; therefore the oldest examples

[57] The papyrological documents referred to within this thesis are cited using the conventional reference system that relates to the published volume in which they are found. For the current list of published editions of papyri and their abbreviations, see Oates *et al.* (2011). Translations used will be from these main volumes unless otherwise stated.
[58] See Bowman (2003) for the Vindolanda tablets. *Ostraca* (*ostracon*, sing.) are pottery sherds or limestone flakes on which texts were written; they represent similar kinds of documents as found on papyri, and often from the similar geographic region.
[59] Palme (2009) 359.
[60] See Pestman for a table of changes to the written form of Greek over time: Pestman (1994) 59-63.
[61] Van Minnen expresses his hope that the increased digitization of papyrological sources will renew interest in palaeography, which as a dating tool "is badly in need of revision." Van Minnen (2009) 649.
[62] This can be demonstrated in chapter 4 of this thesis in relation to wedding gifts.

within these collections have the potential to represent heirlooms transmitted through families.[63] In this sense, the issues surrounding the dating of texts can be comparable to that of residuality discussed earlier in this chapter. The ideal situation, which is seen in some of the source texts used in this work, is when the author has themselves dated the document within the textual contents – this is usually the case for legal documentation, such as the centurion's will which includes the date of AD 320.[64]

Documentary texts also demonstrate their unique value through their frequent discussions of domestic objects, something found more rarely in other sources. The form these references take can vary. Lists, accounts and inventories often consist exclusively of material objects, providing direct examples of the kinds of objects people in Late Antiquity owned, bought and sold. For example, one fourth-century document from Oxyrhynchus lists nothing but objects.[65] However it can also be difficult to understand fully the precise nature of these items and their uses and values. This is because such lists were often written down as an *aide memoire* or factual record, rather than descriptive testimony, because the intended audience was likely the author themselves – therefore expansive detail was unnecessary. Furthermore, lists do not always state the concept that unites the disparate collections of objects, nor the reason why they are being recorded, again making interpretation difficult. In contrast, quasi-official documents, such as contracts, wills, and receipts, can provide a broader context for the discussion of objects, which helps to place the domestic possessions into a frame that allows interpretation of meaning. Here the objects listed are directly relevant to the social context, providing high quality evidence for the discussions within this thesis - for example, a will lists the objects that are bequeathed to the heirs of the deceased, and therefore can provide valuable information on the creation and distribution of heirlooms. Private letters also represent a significant type of documentary text, and often refer to a variety of objects, their exchange, and broader context. As such, these kinds of texts represent a source of significant value when investigating the cultural and personal meanings of domestic objects.

[63] Of course, documents can have significance other than heirloom status – see chapter 3, section III.5.
[64] P.Col.7.188.
[65] P.Oxy.14.1658.

A discussion of the audience was necessary in relation to visual and literary sources; similar is required for documentary texts, however their nature means that the emphasis must move to the author. Thus, we must consider who wrote these texts to appreciate the applicability of their contents. The obvious answer to such a question would be the literate – those members of late antique society who could read and write. This in turn suggests the educated classes, typically those of higher status or economic means. Bagnall has discussed the silences of these written documents, stating that gaps in the representative nature of the source exist for three main reasons: illiteracy or lack of access to writing equipment, problems with survival in the archaeological record, and because certain topics or information were simply not thought important enough to write down.[66] From this we can already see that private letters from Late Antiquity do not represent the lives or possessions of certain sections of society.

Economic status is an especially significant factor, as a person cannot write letters without writing implements, and these cost money. These assumptions build up a picture of the typical writer of late antique documentary texts: a person, from the middle to upper stratum of society, educated and of reasonable economic means. Such stereotypes often have a kernel of truth to them, and indeed individuals who fit such a description would make up a significant number of the writers of documentary texts. However, other groups of writers exist; evidence suggests that such a group was not as homogeneous an array of people as we might first believe. Alongside the upper classes, Bernhard Palme points out the wider social spectrum by highlighting women, teenagers and even children.[67] The papyrological evidence shows that a significant proportion of letter-writers were women, with many more being sent to female recipients.[68] Soldiers stationed far from their home and families within the Roman army also make up a significant proportion of the authors, one of the most famous examples of army personal correspondence being the letters of Claudius Terentianus.[69]

[66] Bagnall (2011) 4.
[67] Palme (2009) 361.
[68] Publications of volumes such as Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) and Rowlandson & Bagnall (1998) emphasise this fact.
[69] See for example, P. Mich. 8.476.

Raffaele Luiselli questions whether the less well-off sections of society were sufficiently literate and motivated to commit their thoughts to writing.[70] Whilst it might be argued that a vast proportion of late antique society could not read or write, there is still evidence that that many were learning and that people of varying levels of ability still wrote texts.[71] Furthermore, scribes were available to write texts for those unable or unwilling to do so themselves, as the number of extant examples testify.[72] Writing materials also need not be expensive: scrap papyrus was inexpensive or even free, as were *ostraca*, and papyrus could be reused.[73] As a result, it would appear that literacy and wealth were not necessarily barriers to writing. When placed on a spectrum showing wealth or status, these individuals would not represent the poorest section of society, but they do serve to prove that the type of writer of private letters was a more heterogeneous group than one might initially anticipate, thus providing a different perspective to the mainly upper class literary authors of the late antique period.

Examples such as these allow us to take a more optimistic approach to these documents as sources on the everyday in Late Antiquity. As Bagnall explains, most adults, including the illiterate, were participants in a system within which writing was constantly used.[74] Written language and its uses were therefore not something simply restricted to the upper echelons of society; it was instead an integral part of late antique life. As such, the use of such texts in combination with other sources of evidence works to provide a fuller view of late antique domestic possessions, that looks towards the less studied lower classes as well as the elite.

[70] Luiselli (2008) 682.
[71] See for example the third- to fourth-century document SB 14.11457, which records a name and the beginning of an alphabet as a writing exercise.
[72] See SB 18.13762 for an example of a scribe-written letter.
[73] Luiselli (2008) 682. This kind of reuse is seen in the fourth-century O.Mich.1.113, a palimpsest document featuring newer receipt text written over a washed out set of accounts.
[74] Bagnall (2011) 4.

CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL APPROACHES

I. INTRODUCTION

To look at an object and assess its meaning, especially in terms of personal sentiment, is a challenging request. As an outsider to the relationship between a person and their most treasured possessions, it can be difficult to identify and understand which objects held significant meanings for their owners, and why this was the case. Whilst form or materials might seem to be allied, for example, to the function of an object, meaning and value initially appears to be invisible within objects. Of course, this is not the case – clues from inscriptions, documentation, and archaeological context can all help identify the potential sentimental meanings of late antique domestic objects. Nevertheless, the meaning of an object is an intangible quality, and the value that it had for its owner highly subjective. It is our job to interpret available evidence accordingly. For this reason, theoretical approaches discussing material culture from disciplines including archaeology, anthropology, and art history are invaluable in informing such an interpretation, allowing us to understand the personal relationship between a person and their possession, and the meanings associated with items of material culture.

The nature of domestic space means it is a controlled environment, with the objects within it explicitly chosen by the inhabitants to form their most intimate surroundings. For this reason, these objects can be argued to be significant in some way. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton reason that domestic objects reflect, as well as shape, the owner's identity and sense of self, occupying as they do a level of permanence in the private dwelling.[75] This link between identity and domestic objects means that the things a person chooses to surround themself with can tell us specific things about their owner, such as their self-image or how they wanted to be seen by others. The intimate space of the home also means that many of the objects commonly found in domestic environments would be personal in some way. As Wallendorf and Arnould affirm, domestic objects work to remind a person of who they are.[76] In terms of identity verification, objects with personal meaning

[75] Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) 14.
[76] Wallendorf & Arnould (1988) 531.

to the owner can do precisely this. The question to be asked is, what kinds of meanings do these objects have, and how can we identify it?

II. A Biographical Approach to Meaningful Objects

As mentioned a moment ago, sentimental value in a domestic object is generally a subjective thing; such value stems from the meanings an object holds for its owner, which itself arises from the interaction and intersection of the object and the owner's individual histories. In the 1980s, Igor Kopytoff discussed the concept of a biography of objects, acknowledging that things, like people, have life spans during which events and changes occur.[77] Since Kopytoff, the theory of object biography has been variously discussed and developed in scholarship. The archaeologists Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall argued in their discussion of a cultural biography of objects that object meaning emerges from social action, a process that can be identified through the application of object biography as a theoretical tool.[78] If we understand social action to be the biographical events that create the history of an object (features, as Kopytoff suggests, such as the manufacture or origin of an object[79]) then we can identify in suitable pieces of evidence the moments at which meanings are created. Identifying the meanings of objects by extension allows an understanding of its potential importance to an owner, indicating sentimental value.

What kinds of meanings do sentimentally valued objects have? Annette Weiner, in her discussion of "inalienable" possessions, identifies some of the most meaningful material possessions as having inextricable links with human memory. As she explains, objects have the ability to function as repositories for memories; through their history (or biography) they retain past memories for the future. [80] In a similar vein, Maines and Glynn describe certain objects as being "numinous" – that is, their significance comes from an association (real or imagined) with a person, place or event endowed with specific importance.[81] Again, these kinds of treasured objects function as a reference

[77] Kopytoff (1986).
[78] Gosden & Marshall (1999) 170.
[79] Kopytoff (1986) 66.
[80] Weiner (1992) 7.
[81] Maines & Glynn (1993) 10.

to the past. The object preserves an intangible memory and through its own materiality manifests the abstract as a solid form, recreating something from the past in the present.[82]

The importance, and ultimately the value, of these treasured personal possessions originate with the memories they store – itself a product of the biography of the object in question. Thus objects of sentimental value act as authenticators of memory through their role as material 'witnesses'. Such an ability is based upon the relationship between the owner and possession, and once the memory preserved by the object is lost – for example after the last person who knows the biography of the object has died – then the object's sentimental meaning and personal value is lost also.[83] The function of objects as perpetuators of the past appears to stem from an innate human desire to prevent change. The investment of objects with personal meaning reflects the desire to create permanence and combat the effects of loss, death, and degeneration that naturally occur in the lived experiences of humans – in this way objects can function to preserve, recreate, and regenerate the past.[84] This allows the preservation and maintenance of memory in a world that is forever changing, and reflects a somewhat futile yet all too human desire to keep things the same in a transitory world.

II.1. Objects and Agency

Importantly, the ability of objects to function as preservers of memory does not mean that the object in question is a passive receptacle – it is not simply having something done *to* it, but rather is actively engaged in the process of meaning and value creation. This is clear from Gosden and Marshall's assertion that in relationships between people and objects, meaning and value is in fact mutually created - that is, the ownership of an object can enhance the biography of the owner, and the act of being owned by a significant person also affects the biography of the object.[85] The lives of people and their objects are inextricably linked, with objects influencing the creation of meaning as much as people. The entanglement of the lives of owner and object, and the implications this has for the creation of meaning is something that is explored by Janet Hoskins' anthropological survey

[82] Maines & Glynn (1993) 10. Lynn Meskell discusses a similar concept – see Meskell (2005) 5.
[83] Maines & Glynn (1993) 10-11. Maines & Glynn describe this intangible quality in treasured objects as the *numen*.
[84] Weiner (1992) 7.
[85] Gosden & Marshall (1999) 170.

of the Kodi people. She demonstrates that ordinary possessions can receive extraordinary significance through their involvement and integration into the events of a person's life.[86] Objects therefore have a biography of their own, but through their involvement and intrusions on the lives of people can come to signify aspects of human biography, and ultimately assist in the creation of identity, through their action.

It is necessary in light of this to consider whether objects have agency. The issue of agency and the extent to which objects have the power to instigate social action is an important one in studies of material culture. Alfred Gell, in his famous work *Art and Agency*, states that both people and things can be agents, initiating causal sequences and behaving as the source of social action.[87] However, he also states that objects can only have 'secondary' agency, as all intention to bring about events and change resides in the mind of the human 'primary' agent. The actions of objects are therefore an extension of this dominant, primary agency.[88] The idea that objects embody (or, to use Gell's terminology, are the 'index' of) the agency of the owner is an interesting one that needs further exploration.

Gell's approach to the issue of agency is anthropocentric, placing emphasis on the primacy of human action. Much of his discussion is valid, however it nonetheless provides only one perspective on the way in which objects and people interact. As Hodder explains, people and objects are inextricably tangled together in a symmetrical relationship; humans use objects and invest their agency in material culture to cause action, however there is also a level of reliance and dependency upon objects which is independent of human intention.[89] A symmetrical approach removes the primacy of human agency that is dominated by the concept of intentionality. The ability to do this is important. If we return to the discussion of objects as treasured possessions, we see that their capacity for concretising memories is independent from any human intention. This is clear from the memories that are suddenly and unexpectedly aroused when encountering objects that remind us of moments from our past. However, it should also be noted that human actors

[86] Hoskins (1998) 2.
[87] Gell (1998) 16.
[88] Gell (1998) 20.
[89] Hodder (2012) 28.

make, use, and preserve objects with the explicit intention of securing memories and sentiment in material form – for example in the case of readymade souvenir objects available to tourists. Therefore a symmetrical approach, one that acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between objects and people, is necessary.

Some of the best-known work on symmetry and agency is by the theorist Bruno Latour, who advocates in his Actor Network Theory (ANT) a rejection of polarities, such as human/object and agent/patient, to create a heterogeneous network in which everything cooperates to enact agency and thus social action.[90] In this approach, the issue of co-operation between people and objects is crucial. Knappett, in his discussion of ANT, states that when looking at the interaction of people and objects from this perspective, deciding who is the agent makes little sense: "Think not of agents as entities, but of agency as a process."[91] This means that in terms of material mementoes and agency, the ability to acquire memory and meaning occurs through the interaction of human and object – it is a process enacted by both.

II.2. Singularised Objects and Measuring Value

It has been demonstrated that the interaction of people and possessions creates meanings and sentimental value by linking the past and the present in material form. These meanings are recognised through the distinction of such a possession from others in the mind of the owner; in this way, to use the vocabulary of Kopytoff, the biography of an object effectively singularises it. Singularisation is when an object is considered different for some reason and removed from the commodity sphere, meaning that it is excluded from further economic exchanges – it will not be bought or sold.[92] To be removed from the economic sphere means that the object is either uniquely valuable, or uniquely worthless – i.e. it is so valuable that there is nothing that exists of an equivalent value with which it can be exchanged, or it has so little value that no willing partner for the exchange can be found.[93] Objects that are considered to have sentimental value by their owners are thus uniquely valuable, regardless of their intrinsic or economic worth to the wider society.

[90] Latour (2005).
[91] Knappett (2008) 140.
[92] Kopytoff (1986) 74, 80.
[93] Kopytoff (1986) 75.

Their personal meaning, in the form of the link to the past that they embody, singularises them, meaning that parting from such objects becomes unthinkable for the owner, as Kopytoff states.[94]

Whilst singularisation is a useful concept, Graeber in his discussion of value points out that to a certain extent all objects are singular – every object has a life history that is in some way distinct from other similar things. Instead of emphasising the role of an object's history in its singularisation, the emphasis should instead be on the object's *capacity* to accumulate a history, as this is what enhances the object's ultimate sentimental value.[95] In this sense the capacity to accumulate and retain histories is linked to the permanence of the object in question. One example, provided by Weiner, is that of all possible objects, the most ineffectual inalienable possession is food as its function is to 'release' in the form of energy rather than to 'store' (in our case, history).[96] Therefore an ephemeral object might become associated with an event, however if it perishes soon afterwards, without a distance of time there is no chance for the memory to be retrieved from it, or for the required sense of nostalgia to be sought out by the owner. An object must exist in time and space in order to be able to later provoke memories and feelings in an observer. The materiality of the object is the means by which it communicates and concretises the memory and associated meanings. As we have already seen, the value of these objects in part derives from their ability to transcend the changes and degeneration wreaked by the passing of time. It is the extent of their permanence that attaches value to the object – as Graeber and Kopytoff state, the value of the most inalienable or singularised object can be measured by the fear of its loss or the owner's reluctance to part with it.[97] Furthermore, in order for value to be acknowledged in an object, distinctions must be made between possessions, which returns us to the idea of singularity. Graeber states himself that comparison is an essential component in assessing value. It is the comparison of objects not only with their origins (the biography of an object) but also the comparisons of these specific objects and histories to each other that allow assessment and judgements of value to be made.[98]

[94] Kopytoff (1986) 80.
[95] Graeber (2001) 34.
[96] Weiner (1992) 38.
[97] Graeber (2001) 34; Kopytoff (1986) 80.
[98] Graeber (2001) 43.

III. Meaningful Objects in the Home

A lot of what has been discussed so far has been done in relatively abstract terms, and it can be difficult to visualise how the theory relates to the evidence available from Late Antiquity, or how such evidence might even be identified. There are nonetheless certain categories of object whose analysis can aid an investigation of this kind. Despite the repeated refrain that this kind of meaning is highly subjective, the occurrence of objects with sentimental value within a society reflects a shared aspect of human nature. Therefore identifiable categories found within late antique evidence such as gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs provide us with an almost readymade structure for discussing objects with sentimental meaning. All of these objects are likely to be found within a domestic environment, having been selected and kept within this setting. Furthermore, these three categories all rely on specific aspects of object biography for their significance. For example, heirlooms are recognised as having accumulated histories based upon their repeated inheritance between generations of a single family. Souvenirs are designated as such because they have come from a certain location or event which they function to commemorate. Gifts are identified as objects involved in social exchanges between individuals, perhaps on a specific occasion.

These categories and the associated theory have governed the selection, discussion and interpretation of the evidence used here. It has also dictated to a certain extent the structure of the rest of this thesis. Each chapter focuses on a type of biographical event that is associated with events in the owner's life. The third chapter then focuses on a specific kind of object– the basket – to build a case study exploring the presence of these different biographical trajectories within a single artefact type. Therefore to preface the rest of this thesis, it is necessary to expand on the theoretical discussions that relate directly to these biographical categories of object.

II.1. Heirlooms

Heirlooms are defined as such due to the nature of their biography; they are possessions that become associated with family through their continued ownership, and ideally their repeated inheritance by successive generations. The value of heirloom objects, as Graeber discusses, comes

from their individual histories – histories with which their owner's own identity becomes entangled.[99]

The meanings that such biographical objects can have are multiple, however the emphasis placed upon successive ownership within a family means that disparate generations are linked through the materiality of one object. Such objects work to contract time through their physical embodiment of the past. Belk, amongst others, has suggested that people consider objects as a part of themselves.[100] If possessions are thus invested with the identities of their owners – both previous and current – then entire families are represented mnemonically in an heirloom because of this biography of ownership. In this way heirlooms bring ancestors into physical contact with the present owner through the object, and suggest the continuation of familial identity for the future generations who it is anticipated will also inherit the object. The transmission of an object down through generations of a family – for example a wedding ring – sustains a familial link; furthermore the value derived from this status ensures that the contexts in which such an object can be exchanged are reduced virtually to one, namely the handing down of the object.[101] This object will continue to be inherited and bequeathed within the family for as long as the value derived from this action persists.

Heirlooms also help to form a sense of personal and group identity. As discussed above, objects can behave as receptacles of memory. In the case of heirlooms this memory is one of family – a specific source of meaning and accordingly sentimental value, which distinguishes it from other kinds of meaningful objects in the home. As Cieraad states, inherited objects are treasured for their ability to keep memories alive and recall individuals such as parents, and places such as the childhood home.[102] In this sense the heirloom object is a personal one, with subjective meanings relating to an individual's own private memories. As such, heirloom objects can function to mould and reinforce personal identity – a key part of which is a sense of where someone comes from and

[99] Graeber (2001) 93.
[100] Belk (1988) 139.
[101] Thomas (1991) 20.
[102] Cieraad (2010) 95.

their own history.[103] However, heirlooms also contain meanings linked to group identity, and a sense of belonging and collective memory. Through heirlooms, family narratives can be created which create 'genealogical' memories and consequently a sense of group identity and belonging. These narratives are not reliant upon first hand and individual memories of family members; rather the heirloom object helps construct these stories of family identity. In this way, small scale, familial histories are created.[104] This history, and the role of the individual within it, extends beyond their life and personal accomplishments; it instead is derived from the history of the object.[105]

In this way, these heirloom objects are identical with the inalienable possessions that Annette Weiner describes. These items are imbued with the "intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners", ideally kept by their own kind and passed down from one generation to another.[106] The value of heirlooms is based in their retention of memories for future generation and the ability to hearken back to past ancestors, either in a specific or general sense.

III.2. Souvenirs

Souvenirs are a set of objects with which we, in today's age of cheap travel and leisure, are very familiar with as the material tokens of a holiday, collected and carried home by travellers around the world. However, souvenirs have a broader definition than this. Again, in terms of the biography of these objects, the emphasis is placed upon their ability to be associated with memories and events from history (either in the private life of the object and owner, or more broadly). The nature of the souvenir object means that it is metonymic in that it is a "sample" of the original place or experience with which the owner associates it.[107] It is something taken from the event or location that through its part represents the original whole. This biographical origin is the feature that gives these objects their personal meaning. Souvenir objects are a response to nostalgia for other and past

[103] Belk (1988) 148.
[104] Stewart (1993) 137.
[105] Belk (1988) 159.
[106] Weiner (1992) 6.
[107] Stewart (1993) 136.

places; they not only trace a person's route through the world but also allow places or actions to be revisited through their materiality.[108]

Stewart discusses at length the function and meanings of souvenir objects. According to her, there are two main types. Souvenirs of "exterior sights" are usually readymade objects, often representational in nature, which are available for people to buy as souvenirs.[109] Souvenirs of "individual experience" are the material "samples" of places or events mentioned above which are not produced with the intention of becoming souvenirs.[110] Such samples are taken from experiences in the life of the owner, intertwining memory and biography in material form. In this sense such souvenirs can be categorised as the numinous objects discussed earlier. Souvenirs of individual experience are often associated with rites of passage, and when collected in bulk form a material autobiography of their owner.[111] This echoes Maines and Glynn's comment that numinous objects create a physical connection to the past, especially for objects associated with intense experiences such as birth, marriage, suffering or success.[112] The main value of these objects is therefore a subjective one, dependent as they are on personal experiences and the person's associated memory.

The problem that souvenir objects seek to address is that one cannot hold on to an experience; it is fleeting and intangible. Memories of the experience immediately take the place of the experience itself. Stewart explains that this intangibility of an authentic experience means it moves away from the body in a process of distancing – the memory of this experience is thus replaced by the memory created through the souvenir object, whose materiality allows it to stand outside of the self.[113] Furthermore, souvenirs also address the importance of the experience. Stewart states that people do not require souvenirs of events that are repeatable, but rather ones that can exist only through the invention of a narrative, in which the souvenir object is involved.[114] The souvenir object thereby announces through its materiality not only the memory of the event for the owner, but also the

[108] Digby (2006) 171.
[109] Stewart (1993) 138.
[110] Stewart (1993) 138.
[111] Stewart (1993) 139.
[112] Maines & Glynn (1993) 10.
[113] Stewart (1993) 133.
[114] Stewart (1993) 135.

importance and value assigned to it. It preserves rare occasions and important memories, and provides authenticity to the narrative of personal history.

That is not to say that the other, more conventional, souvenir objects (Stewarts's souvenirs of "exterior sights") cannot also be personal objects. Souvenirs work to move public places or experiences into the realm of the private; in this way something shared or common is reframed in the context of a personal history.[115] Similarly by purchasing a readymade souvenir – an object available to all at the location with the economic means to buy – it is turned into an individual private possession that reflects the individual.[116] Such an object becomes personal as it illustrates and embodies a moment or event within the life narrative of the owner. Conventional souvenirs usually reference two explicit things – the experience of travel and the owner's memory of this, and the physical location that has been visited. Adams has described how exploring a place on foot creates a memory of the location. The experience of a place consists of a person's physical involvement with the specific environment through their bodily senses; this impression is then likely to be remembered with great fondness if it is a place that is loved.[117] In this way, objects brought back from places or events, especially travels, are more than mementoes of time and place; they are also associated with the actual experience of travel. [118]

Souvenirs are therefore metonyms for places and events.[119] Such objects often communicate a location or event through their physical form. In terms of the initial impression one might gain from a place, this is reliant upon the location's 'texture'. This texture, as discussed by Adams *et al,* is formed of the distinctive but superficial qualities that are experienced on the surface of location where subject and object are merged.[120] These distinctive qualities can be quite physical and echoed in the material nature of the souvenir – for example the second-century Rudge Cup (fig. 1) thought to come from Hadrian's Wall and decorated with a brickwork pattern, echoing the wall

[115] Stewart (1993) 138.
[116] Stewart (1993) 138.
[117] Adams (2001) 188.
[118] Hitchcock (2000) 1.
[119] Digby (2006) 171.
[120] Adams, *et al* (2001) xiii.

itself.[121] Other objects might feature decoration that represents the most well-known sights within a city, or be a craft object of a type closely associated with one location or area. This produces a link between the souvenir object and a generalized image of a culture, town, or even village.[122] Such recognisability in the object in terms of its origin speaks not only to the souvenir owner of the place and their personal memories, but also to others who understand where the object is from when it is displayed. As such, the souvenir provides tangible proof of a person's travels, authenticating the locations they have visited. [123]

This last point makes clear that conventional souvenirs are not just reliant on an individual and personal memory of a place – rather the readymade souvenir, as described by Benson, relies on a memory that is outward and collective.[124] The production of such objects can therefore provide prefabricated and standardized memories of a location, even for those who have never visited in person.[125] As such, the authenticity that souvenirs convey does not necessarily have to relate to a personal experience or a specific memory; rather it can play on cultural memories and wider understandings of the meaning of locations, and the subsequent ownership of objects associated with these places.

III.3. Gifts

There has been a huge amount of literature written about gifts and their role within society. One of the most famous theoretical texts on the subject is the early-twentieth century essay on the gift, by Marcel Mauss. This text gives us what has become the traditional anthropological view of gift giving; that this act is the creation of an obligation between parties to exchange further gifts and counter gifts.[126] In this way, the giving of gifts forms links and relationships between the individual donor and recipient, tying them together through the resultant social requirement of further exchanges that making gifts creates. The result is that gifts are therefore radically different from

[121] See Breeze (2012).
[122] Hitchcock (2000) 1.
[123] Hitchcock (2000) 2.
[124] Benson (2004) 16.
[125] Benson (2004) 16.
[126] Mauss (1966) 10-11.

commodities, which when involved in an exchange have no social effect.[127] In the 1980s, C. A. Gregory reiterated that gifting objects creates and maintains social links between people; an example of the agency of objects as discussed above.[128] Within such a perspective, the act of gift exchange can also indicate the extent to which a relationship is sustained or disfigured. [129]

The result is that giving a gift creates a connection between two people, with the object exchanged tracing this link. As long as gifts continue to be exchanged, as is socially required, then the relationship between the two individuals is maintained. The exchange of gifts also suggests that the individuals involved are of an equal standing, and that the kinds of objects exchanged are also equal in value.[130] Gift giving in this sense allows the creation and maintenance of social ties. As Schrift states, the surplus value from gift exchange is in the form of relationships and connections that did not exist prior to the circulation of the gift.[131] In this sense, we see objects being used as tools of the people who give them as gifts; the object itself seems almost irrelevant as meaning appears to be in the act of giving rather than the object, and the fact that the exchanged objects are of comparable value.

However, the gift object itself forms the tangible expression of the social relationship created through this specific exchange behaviour.[132] It becomes a material statement of the connections between individuals that the act of exchange itself cannot sustain. The behaviour of giving and its consequences are embodied in the form of the gift. The object is therefore associated with the relationship between the gift givers, and the individuals themselves. This action also enhances the biography of the object, contributing to the history that it accumulates. As we have already seen, this biographical action creates meaning, and the memory of the gift giving is within the object itself.

[127] Thomas (1991) 15.
[128] Gregory (1982) 41.
[129] Thomas (1991) 19.
[130] Graeber (2012) 105-9.
[131] Schrift (1995) 95.
[132] Sherry (1983) 158.

Gifts can also represent the giver in physical form. Mauss himself states that the reason people feel compelled to return gifts is because the objects contain something of the giver.[133] Similarly, Gregory suggests that gift economies work to personify objects.[134] The gift can be associated with the giver through their role in the biography of the object, or alternatively, as Sherry suggests, the gift is selected as representative of their giver's identity; this identity is then confirmed when donated in the objectified form of a gift presented to another.[135]

III.3.i. Handmade Gifts

One particular type of gift that occurs within the late antique evidence, and is therefore necessary to discuss here, is that of the handmade object. These are objects that are made with the intention of giving the finished item to another person as a gift. When thinking about the meanings that could be embodied by objects with such specific biographies, the theoretical literature can be hard to navigate. Initially there is a problem in that much of the discussion surrounding what we would call handmade objects is concerned with the concept of 'craft'. Craft is often defined by its juxtaposition with either fine art or industrialised manufacturing techniques. Clearly such distinctions are not useful within our source material; in the late antique period, societies were, of course, pre-industrial and therefore all man-made material culture was strictly 'handmade', despite the occurrence of large-scale mass production. Literature on actual craft production also tends to emphasise the specific techniques used in creating such objects, rather than their meanings or role within society.[136] A more useful distinction might therefore be between gifts made specifically for another, and gifts made of purchased objects or existing possessions.

Marxist theory tells us that the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour expended on it and the working time necessary for its production.[137] Whilst a commodity is an object that participates in economic exchanges, Appadurai emphasises that such a definition relies on the context in which the object is placed.[138] There is no material difference between a

[133] Mauss (1966) 10.
[134] Gregory (1982) 45.
[135] Sherry (1983) 159.
[136] For example, see Wild (1976).
[137] Marx (2000) 499.
[138] Appadurai (1986) 12-13.

commodity and a meaningful object like a gift; indeed a commodity can be purchased and then given as a gift, the change of context affecting its identity. Therefore the value of a handmade object that is given as a gift seems to also derive, at least in part, from the time taken to make it and the labour expended. What is important to note is that the production of such gifts happens in a person's spare time, that outside of their regular work or social commitments.

Theodor Adorno discusses the concept of free time however caution is advised. It is unlikely that there was such a sharp distinction between the monoliths of 'work' and 'freetime' as Adorno discusses in his essay on the subject, especially within the lives of late antique home-based workers such as wives and servants.[139] Furthermore, such handmade gifts are not the results of the dilettante hobbies he describes; these objects, largely made within the domestic environment, are instead the work of non-professional, rather than unskilled, individuals. However, his writings do provoke thought on the use of a person's time. The handmade object represents a choice made in the mind of the person to use this time to make something not for themself. In this sense, the making of such an object could be viewed as a form of sacrifice or a gift in itself. Labour is usually exchanged for money or subsistence – in the case of homemade gifts, this is labour expended for no apparent recompense if the gift exchange is posited as altruistic or agapic (whether it is in fact or not).[140] These objects are therefore not made for economic reasons – rather they are made to perform as social agents, creating and maintaining relationships between individuals as we see above.

The fact that an object is made by a specific person alters its biography and creates meaning. Objects that have been created or altered by a person are made into a part of themselves by that process.[141] The object begins to represent and share the identity of the maker. This is suggested by Gell, who states that artefacts as manufactured objects specify (or are 'indexes' of) their maker.[142] Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton explain that objects can be considered to contain the residual psychic energy of the person who invests time or effort into it, meaning that

[139] Adorno (2002) 187-90.
[140] This is considered the "perfect" gift: see Belk (1996) 60.
[141] Belk (1988) 144.
[142] Gell (1998) 23-4.

part of that person's life is now within the object.[143] Therefore to give a homemade gift is to give someone a part of yourself, which they may or may not recognise. As Thomas states, the manufacture of objects permanently embody one's practical activity, although there is no certainty that subsequent users will acknowledge the link between an object's existence and a person's labour.[144] Therefore it seems that for the recipient of such a gift, the object's meaning depends upon the depth of the owner's knowledge of its biography – if a person does not know who made an object, then this knowledge will not affect their understanding of its meaning.

III.4. Objects as People

Throughout all of the theoretical discussions surrounding types of meaningful domestic object, there has been a recurring idea – the fact that objects can embody people. It has been demonstrated that domestic objects can be considered representative and part of their owners and that, furthermore, to make, alter, or gift an object imparts something of the person into the item. It therefore seems that, as well as having the capacity to contain memories for owners, objects can also have personal meanings as they behave as surrogate people. Jean-Sebastien Marcoux gives an example of this phenomenon in his description of the down-sizing of a Mme Cabot; some of the possessions that she keeps after moving house are considered special as they represent people she has known during her life; the objects are thus acting as surrogates for absent people.[145]

Belk's concept of the "extended self" has already been alluded to in relation to handmade gifts, above. He states that objects can become physical extensions of a person's identity, especially if that person has invested time, labour or money into the object.[146] Such a use of material culture allows the person, through their extended self, to do things that they would otherwise be incapable of.[147] A similar idea is discussed by Gamble in his work on the Palaeolithic era, which he describes as the "release from proximity". In this he states that networks of people expand over space and time, and the geographic separation of individuals allows objects to become personified – taking on

[143] Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.
[144] Thomas (1991) 16.
[145] Marcoux (2001) 72.
[146] Belk (1988) 144.
[147] Belk (1988) 146.

the identities of people.[148] Therefore it seems that as people become absent in the lives of others – either through death or geographical relocation – objects can instead take their place, providing a physical presence and comfort that the human actor is not capable of providing themselves.

That objects can have such a 'surrogate' role within the lives of their owners is representative of the kinds of relationships that people have with examples of material culture, especially those within the home. As Dant explains, people form "quasi-social" relationships with objects, in which they act out abstract relationships they experience in wider society; in such a process, objects take the place of other social beings.[149] Therefore it is understandable that domestic possessions can take on the identity of other people and as such form relationships with their owners. In this way, it seems possible that the interior world of the home can represent the wider social environment that the inhabitant experiences. The role of material culture within this process is crucial.

IV. A SUITABLE APPROACH FOR LATE ANTIQUITY?

This discussion of relevant theory has demonstrated that domestic objects can indeed be meaningful and hold sentimental value for their owners. Such theoretical wrangling seems for contemporary onlookers almost an exercise in stating the obvious. In our society, we know from first hand experience that some of our possessions are more valuable than others, because of the meanings and memories they store for us within the home. However, can we be sure that this is also appropriate for a study in late antique material culture? In terms of the application of object biography, Gosden and Marshall themselves emphasise the importance of acknowledging societal differences in the accumulation of meanings in objects.[150] Furthermore, there is currently an emphasis within scholarship on materiality and the role of objects within societies, both past and present, which insinuates that such a focus could be due to the following of academic fashions, rather than empirical merit. Therefore the question needs to be addressed of whether it is in fact anachronistic to apply such theoretical approaches to the evidence of a society distant in time and location from our own. Can the domestic objects of Late Antiquity really be discussed in the terms outlined above?

[148] Gamble (1998) 443.
[149] Dant (1999) 2.
[150] Gosden & Marshall (1999) 177.

IV.1. Religion and Material Culture

Within the religions of Late Antiquity, material culture had an important role. Patricia Cox Miller identifies an increased emphasis on objects at the beginning of the fourth century, in what she calls the "material turn". This social shift saw an increased appreciation for the religious nature of material things and an increase in visual spectacle that appealed to the imagination.[151] Many traditions and practices were continuations of beliefs and behaviours of the earlier Roman period. Pagans believed in the ability of inanimate statues to become inhabited by the god that they represented.[152] The continued belief in the inherent power of material representations, such as statues, is demonstrated by the reaction of Christians towards traditional pagan statuary. The topic is discussed by Liz James, who lists various stories of statues being inhabited by pagan demons within the Byzantine Empire; one example is the presence of a demon inside a statue of Aphrodite in fifth-century Gaza, which was expelled by a crowd bearing crosses led by Bishop Porphyry.[153] Not only does this show that material objects were considered active with a powerful role within society, but also that the intangible (in the form of the demon) can be combatted through material means (namely, the bearing of crosses). Despite this reaction to the pagan statuary of Late Antiquity, Christians similarly relied upon objects within their worship and invested them with power. Icons, made of painted boards that depicted saints and other holy figures, would be venerated and meditated upon in the belief that the image before them allowed communication directly to the figure represented. Likewise, relics were considered to hold divine power within their material nature – for example, the terracotta pilgrim tokens that were manufactured and distributed at Christian holy sites throughout Late Antiquity. The value of these small and cheap objects comes from the soil with which they are made, which was taken from the *loca sancta* that they commemorate; the tokens communicated sanctity through the direct link created between the object and the location.[154]

[151] Cox Miller (2009) 3.
[152] This did not always relate to statues of gods; any representation could be understood to be a manifestation of the represented individual. Stewart (2003) 191-3.
[153] James (1996) 15. Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*; trans. Hill (1913).
[154] For further discussion on pilgrim tokens see chapter 5, section III.1.i.

The sense of touch, overtly present in the example above, was significant in Christianity and represents an important link between religion and material culture. Sanctity was communicated through physical contact and was therefore reliant upon the material nature of both people and objects. This is given clear emphasis in accounts from the Gospels: in the story of the woman with the issue of blood, she is cured by touching the hem of Jesus' cloak,[155] and the disciple Thomas only believes that Jesus has in fact risen from the dead after his touching of the wound in Christ's side.[156] For Christians, some of the most important objects were relics, which represented the tangible proof of the Christian faith. The significance of these objects is witnessed by the pilgrimages made by the faithful, with the aim often being to physically touch the relic in question to achieve a blessing.

Within buildings, materials were selected to create impressive decorative schemes. In churches, the material nature of glass was harnessed in the mosaics decorations that covered their interiors. The use of gold, as explored in Dominic Janes' study, allowed the communication of specific ideas and ideals to onlookers. For example, the brightness and reflective nature of the metal was associated with light, life, and goodness in Christian rhetoric, and as such was used extensively in church decoration.[157] Interiors of churches often included images of saints and other holy figures. Saints could be recognised from their material attributes – these were usually ordinary everyday items that were linked with the identity of the individual. One example is St Peter and the attribute of keys, a combination of the divine and domestic material spheres; the early sixth-century ivory plaque from Ravenna (fig. 2) depicts the saint with this object in his hand. The inclusion of this object makes the figure recognisable, providing a visual shorthand to onlookers. The material attribute of keys communicates the identity of the figure through the association with Peter's role as the keeper of the Gates of Heaven.[158]

A reliance upon objects was not exclusive to Christian and pagan worship in Late Antiquity, as attested by the many artefacts found that feature Jewish symbols on them. The menorah – the

[155] Matthew 9:20-22.
[156] John 20:27-28.
[157] Janes (1998) 140.
[158] Matthew 16:19.

Jewish seven-armed candelabra – is found extensively in this period as a decorative element, such as on the clay lamp in fig. 3. Alongside the menorah, other objects were used to signify the Jewish faith. The most common were four ritual objects - the *sofar* (a ram's horn), *lulev* (a palm branch), *ethrog* (a citron fruit), and incense shovel.[159] These can be seen on the fourth-century AD Torah Shrine mosaic panel in the Severus synagogue at Hammath-Tiberias (fig. 4).

IV.2. Objects of secular status

Beyond religious contexts, objects were broadly used to communicate messages about social status in the secular realm of Late Antiquity. For example, material culture represents one of the main tools used by the imperial court to convey their status in society. Late antique images of the emperor, and the way they were understood within society, were influenced by the modes of representation of the Roman Empire. Imperial statuary in earlier periods, especially in the Greek east, served to reinforce long distance relationships between citizens and the absent emperor by providing an authoritarian presence in material form – a legacy of the Hellenic imperial cult, which represented emperors as gods.[160] In Late Antiquity, there was also an association between the power of the imperial image and those of Christian holy figures; this affinity is explicitly discussed by Theophilus when he compares the image of the emperor to the image of the Virgin Mary.[161] In Late Antiquity, the image of the emperor was circulated throughout the Empire in material form, via issues of coins. The power of the imperial image was also present elsewhere in everyday life. Steelyard weights used in commerce were often in the shape of busts of empresses, especially fashionable in the fifth century AD (fig. 5). Such a representation allowed the decoration and aesthetic enhancement of an otherwise mundane and utilitarian object – something that itself demonstrates the emphasis placed upon objects and their materiality during this period. Furthermore, the emperor, his image, his will, laws, associated offices, buildings, clothing, and even stables were considered as sacred.[162] Therefore the steelyard weight likely drew on an extension of this imperial power, relying on the contemporary taboo surrounding the defacement of imperial images to ensure that the weight would not be prone to illicit tampering.

[159] Hachlili (2009) 29-30.
[160] Stewart (2003) 170.
[161] Theophilus, *Homily on the Virgin;* trans. Worrel (1923).
[162] Kelly (1998) 143. The counterpart to the power of imperial images the practice of *damnatio memoriae*; see Varner (2004) 1-20.

In terms of materials, the colour purple was explicitly associated with the emperor and his family. Porphyry stone would denote imperial power through its colour, but also the knowledge that this material was expensive, difficult to work, and hailed from the imperial quarries in Egypt, on the Empire's edge.[163] With regards to clothing, strictly speaking only the imperial family was allowed the prestige of wearing the colour purple, and restrictions were placed upon the manufacture and ownership of purple garments. The Theodosian Code lists the manufacture and concealment of purple clothing as a crime akin to high treason.[164] The dye itself was derived from the shell of the *murex*, a type of sea snail; a large number of shells were needed to make only a tiny quantity, and the production technique was difficult and lengthy.[165] As such it was an expensive and prestigious commodity, and by extension so were any textile products with which it was dyed.

Beyond the imperial family, objects were used to denote the status of those working in various government positions. Much like the attributes of saints discussed above, certain objects were associated with specific positions of status within a formalised hierarchy. For example, the attributes of a magistrate are described by Asterius of Amasea:

> "And of what worth are the possessions of magistrates, the canopy, the silver chariot, the golden wand? Do not these things always attend the magistrate, yet never the same one long, but each for a little season?"[166]

The wand was a symbol of office, similar to the symbolic *fasces* of the Roman period. These objects significantly have not only intrinsic economic worth but also symbolic value; they communicate the position of the owner, and their exclusivity sets apart the individual from the masses. Consuls, the chief magistrates of the state, were also allowed to demonstrate their status within society through material means. Their accession to office was commemorated through the creation of ivory diptychs, which were restricted to this office only, and would be distributed as gifts to their peers.[167] These were luxurious objects, not only in terms of the prestigious material

[163] Török (2005) 183.
[164] *Cod. Theod.* 10.21.3; trans. Pharr (1952).
[165] Reese (1987) 203-4.
[166] Asterius, *Hom*. 2; trans. Anderson & Johnson Goodspeed (1904).
[167] Bowes (2001) 338.

but also the craftsmanship involved in their creation. Their status as consuls was communicated through these extravagant gifts, emphasised by the exclusivity of their creation and distribution.

Status could also be conveyed materially within the home, another arena of display. Literature for the period written by leading church figures demonstrates how, much to the church's displeasure, people were attached to their possessions for reasons such as prestige and status. One of the sermons of Asterius of Amasea derides the wealthy for owning luxurious possessions such as purple wall hangings, extensive dining silver, lamp stands and extravagant silver inlaid furniture.[168] Homes were also carefully decorated according to financial means. Often the most popular and prestigious household objects were recreated in cheaper materials or manufacturing techniques to fulfil the desire of the lower classes to emulate the material possessions of the wealthy. Glass, ceramic and bronze imitations of more expensive silverware can be found in the archaeological record – for example the copper-alloy drinking cups in the second- to third-century Chaourse Treasure.[169]

IV.3. Personal Possessions

A person's possessions could also hold important positions within the lives of late antique men, women and children. The concept of a biography of objects, as discussed extensively above, was not unknown; an interesting quote from John Chrysostom acknowledges the commemorative capacity of objects:

> […] and let us endeavour to carry along with us a memento of the present fast when it is over. And as it often happens when we have purchased a vestment, or a slave, or a precious vase, we recall again the time when we did so, and say to each other, *"That slave I purchased at such a festival; that garment I bought at such a time;"* so, in like manner, if we now reduce to practice this law, we shall say, I reformed the practice of swearing during that Lent […][170]

Therefore personal possessions could easily become treasured objects. Beyond this, material culture was closely interwoven with the lives of people in the form of personal possessions. Some

[168] Asterius, *Hom.* 3; trans. Anderson & Johnson Goodspeed (1904).
[169] Baratte (1993) 231-243, esp. 241. The plating of copper vessels would not only change their appearance but also remove the unpleasant smell produced by the copper alloy beneath. Drandaki (2013) 165 n.7. It should also be noted that the fourth century AD was a period of luxurious glassware production and therefore not all examples represent a cheaper equivalent: Dunbabin (2003b) 163.
[170] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*, 6.16; trans. Stephens (1889).

objects relate to hygiene, such as the 'nail-cleaners' that are often found in late Roman Britain. Often worn on the body, these personal items were not necessarily used for cleaning nails; their overall interpretation associates them with grooming and hygiene but any function more specific than this is unclear.[171] Combs from the late antique period also fit into the category of personal hygiene objects.[172] A third- to fourth-century ivory example from the British Museum features a prominent inscription naming a woman – Modestina – who was presumably the owner of the object (fig. 6).[173] Such inscriptions emphasise the relationship between individuals and their belongings. The name of another owner is found on a bracelet from the Hoxne Hoard, from Britain. The gold bracelet, dating to the fourth to fifth century AD, features pierced decoration spelling out, VTERE FELIX DOMINA IVLIANE, or "Use happily, lady Juliana" (fig. 7).[174] Whilst jewellery represents some of the most obvious examples of personal possessions, any objects used or displayed upon the body, such as the comb and nail cleaner above, can become closely associated with the identity of their owner.

Both the comb and nail-cleaners above demonstrate the affinity between personal objects that tend to the well being of the human body and their owners. However, a well-established link between material culture and magic in Late Antiquity provides plenty more examples of objects kept on the person or within the home to prevent illness and protect from evil forces.[175] Excavations at a late antique *domus* at Butrint, Albania have revealed apotropaic devices both as amuletic objects that belonged to the owners and also symbols incorporated into the fabric of the house through decoration. A copper tag found at the site features on one side the figure of a horseman triumphing over a traditional female demon, who was commonly associated with death during childbirth and infancy; consequently this type of amulet is thought to have been worn by pregnant women.[176] The

[171] Eckardt & Crummy (2006) 83. There is the suggestion that these objects were in fact tools used by those afflicted with trachoma, a bacterial illness of the eyes; the instruments would be carried on the body and used to alleviate the symptoms of the disease. See Morrison (2013).
[172] Combs were often used to remove head lice, as seen by the remains of the parasites found on a fifth- to sixth-century wooden comb from Antinöe, Egypt. See Palma (1991) 94.
[173] The full inscription reads MODESTINA VHEE, which is presumably the owner's name followed perhaps by the misspelt word *vale*, translating as "Modestina Farewell". Alternatively, the second part of the inscription could represent a set of initials.
[174] Johns & Bland (1994) 170.
[175] The topic of magic in Late Antiquity has been extensively studied; see Maguire (1995) for the standard synthesis.
[176] Mitchell (2007) 290.

other side shows an eye being attacked by a range of assailants, serving to protect from the 'evil' or 'envious' eye, which was blamed for many of the misfortunes that afflicted the lives of people in Late Antiquity.[177] This eye imagery is also echoed in the early fifth century decorative scheme on the floor of the entrance to the house, which served to protect all those inside the building.[178] Material protection from evil also extended to clothing, as Maguire explores. Designs such as apotropaic knots were woven into textiles and used to decorate garments and soft furnishings within the domestic space.[179] Such symbols include the Heracles knot, which can be seen in the fourth- to fifth-century rug in fig. 8.[180]

V. Conclusions

There seems little reason why the sensibilities recognisable to us today would not have intruded upon the relationships people had with their domestic possessions in Late Antiquity. In the introduction to his book *Materiality,* Miller highlights how many religious cultures are known to place emphasis on that which stands behind the surface of materiality, conceptualising the spiritual as the real invisible world whilst the material world is transient and illusionary.[181] Late Antiquity was indeed a deeply religious and superstitious world; it was also a world in which material culture was embedded deeply within the lives of people. To the people of Late Antiquity, the importance of spirituality and materiality in everyday life were not incompatible or competing interests. Objects had deeply personal meanings, and held various types of value, demonstrating an attachment to objects that represented the opposite of mere materialism.[182]

Nicole Boivin rightly points out that viewing materiality as the front for deeper meanings is yet another reimagining of the artificial Western dichotomy between 'real' and 'imagined', 'ideal' and 'material', 'subject' and 'object', and as a result ignores the true role of materiality in past cultures by assuming it is a text to be interpreted.[183] We must acknowledge that the world is not split simply into opposing yet complementary configurations that can be neatly studied, and that materiality is

[177] Mitchell (2007) 290.
[178] Mitchell (2007) 281-82.
[179] Maguire (1990) 216.
[180] Stauffer (1995) 24.
[181] Miller (2005) 1.
[182] Marcoux (2001) 82.
[183] Boivin (2010) 20.

not opposed to all higher, traditionally intangible concepts, beliefs and values. The presence of grave goods in societies across the world and throughout history demonstrates that objects have a more complex relationship with humans than either simply performing a function or representing something intangible. The differences between today's society and that of the past do not make object theory an inappropriate tool with which to approach the domestic materiality of Late Antiquity.

CHAPTER 3: HEIRLOOMS

I. INTRODUCTION

Heirlooms are possessions given by one generation to the next through donation by family members, or inheritance on the death of a relative. As discussed in chapter 2, their value comes from this specific history; they function to not only preserve memories of previous owners but also represent the identity of the family in material form. Such meaning is inextricably linked to their specific biography – the continuity of ownership and the repeated donation and inheritance of objects through successive generations. As such they work to keep the past within the present, linking the present (and future) owners with their own heritage, creating a sense of continuity that seeks to defy the passing of time.

This chapter discusses the evidence for the existence of heirlooms within late antique society. It seeks to identify the forms these kinds of objects took and the circumstances in which their meaning was created. Generally speaking, late antique heirlooms have only been discussed within studies of discrete object types, such as jewellery, silver plate and statuary. For example, Johns' monograph on the Hoxne late Roman treasure discusses the potential for certain jewellery items to represent heirlooms, but does so alongside other interpretive discussions such as the technical elements of jewellery manufacture and reasons for the hoard's deposition.[184] Additionally, the word 'heirloom' is often used within late antique scholarship as a descriptor for curated objects; this is evident in Stirling's work on late antique statuary collections which uses this word to denote the age of an object rather than any specific meaning associated with ancestors and family identity.[185] Finally, the other area that intersects with the topic of heirlooms is in studies of law. However such work usually focuses on the legalities of inheritance, rather than the objects themselves – see for example the third chapter of Geoffrey Nathan's volume on the late antique family.[186] No study on late antique material culture has yet focused exclusively on heirlooms as meaningful possessions, and the personal perspective of older objects has generally been overlooked. This chapter aims to help rectify this. By collecting together disparate kinds of objects united by their heirloom status,

[184] Johns (2010) 28.
[185] Stirling (2005).
[186] Nathan (2000) 55-73.

comparisons can be made which will be considered within the discussion section at the end of this chapter.

I.1. Evidence

In most cases, the biography of an object is invisible, and this is often true of heirlooms. However, whilst these enigmatic objects can be hard to identify within the available evidence, certain types of sources are more likely to aid such an identification.

Broadly speaking, textual sources can provide explicit descriptions of object biographies, allowing unambiguous identification of objects that held heirloom status. Literary sources can also refer to the physical or social context of such objects, and provide us with an impression of contemporary perceptions of the role of heirlooms in society. Further to this, documentary texts record and reveal the existence of these objects within the practicalities of everyday life. Surviving legal papers such as wills, dowry documents, and marriage contracts document the kinds of objects that were passed down through the generations of a family, and the occasions on which this sort of behaviour occurred. As such, they have the ability to provide more information than the material remains alone are able to.

Certain archaeological milieus are also more likely to reveal the presence of heirloom objects. This is in part due to a key characteristic of heirlooms – their age. Their preservation and extended curation within a family means that such items are necessarily older than other contemporary examples of material culture; as a result they can be identified within the archaeological record. The issue of residual artefacts within archaeological contexts has already been examined, and residuality is a factor that can contribute to the discovery of apparently older objects within late antique contexts.[187] However, often non-residual objects of age can still be identified. This is most likely to happen in sealed assemblages within closely dated contexts.

Hoards provide one such type of context. Formed of groups of objects deposited in the ground at one time, older objects within the assemblage might represent heirlooms. This is especially true if

[187] See chapter 1, section II.1.

the hoard can be interpreted as one of household material or personal possessions buried for safekeeping and ultimately never retrieved. Grave goods also provide an opportunity to identify heirloom objects within an archaeological context. In such circumstances, anomalous dates for artefacts in a burial assemblage might point to the presence of heirloom possessions. Often within both hoards and grave contexts, the older objects found are of a high quality or economic value. The problem with valuable objects is that it is difficult to distinguish between aged objects kept for intrinsic value and precious objects kept for sentimental reasons as heirlooms. However, the presence of low worth domestic possessions of age within grave contexts can hint that they were preserved for their personal value as there would be few other reasons to keep such items.

I.2. Interpreting older objects

At this point, a note of caution must be introduced. It is important to acknowledge that the mere presence of an older object should not lead to the automatic interpretation of it as an heirloom. Objects of age have multiple trajectories that include possibilities other than their function as heirlooms.

Older objects may have value within the home that is unrelated to heirlooms or their involvement in family biography. For example, older items might be acquired late in their life and be displayed within domestic space in order to communicate specific messages about the homeowner. Objects of age can therefore represent ideals that the owner wishes to display to others, or feels represents his or her own identity. The culture of the Roman period and classicism as a cultural style was a popular heritage in Late Antiquity. As Marinescu states, classical objects from this earlier period, such as statues and miniature works of art, bridged cultural differences between the past and present and allowed such antique items to be admired and emulated.[188] The late antique and Byzantine periods witnessed the self-identification of the state and its citizens as 'Romans', despite changes in terms of imperial leadership and state faith. Therefore the inclusion of older objects in domestic material culture seems entirely natural as a statement of cultural identity and social values. This contemporary fashion for older styles of objects is also visible in the extensive reuse of classical motifs in late antique material culture. For example, the subject of the decoration on the

[188] Marinescu (1996) 285.

ivory pyxis in fig. 9 is the story of the Judgement of Paris; this is a story from Greek mythology however the object dates to the early-sixth century AD and is from Egypt.

The late antique popularity of classical styles of material culture, such as the pyxis above, is related to the concept of *paideia.* This was the traditional Greek education, and a sign of elite status, culture, and learning. Such schooling was based upon the values and virtues of the earlier Greek and Roman periods and could be represented visually through a preference for classical-style objects, especially representations of pagan gods, antique objects, and mythological scenes.[189] Material culture displayed in the home would reflect such a background and convey the education and status of the owner to onlookers. This is especially true for objects like statuary; whilst some examples of earlier Roman sculpture would represent heirloom objects curated by families, other items were likely purchased as antiques, reflecting the desirability of displaying such cultural items within the home.[190] This seems to be the case for certain examples of Roman Samian Ware in Britain, a distinctive red-bodied type of pottery from Gaul. Wallace discusses the presence of such ceramics as complete vessels in the fourth century as survival through reuse; he refers to the famous Corbridge pottery assemblage that appears to be a shop selling Samian Ware of over one hundred years of age for reuse.[191] This apparent second hand market in Samian would cater to patrons who wished to emulate their forebears through the use and display of antique objects, which communicated messages surrounding their education and heritage.

It is important to note that such antiques could also fulfil more practical requirements. The presence of older objects in late antique homes might alternatively represent a scarcity of newer examples in contemporary society, representing reuse through necessity. Conversely a surfeit of older objects, especially those that have become obsolete, could also explain the presence of older examples of domestic material culture within this period. The interpretation of older objects as representing practical reuse within late antique contexts can also be applied to evidence from hoard assemblages. Some hoards were accumulated for their economic worth and material value, rather

[189] Elsner (1998) 106-8.
[190] Stirling (2005) 220.
[191] Wallace (2006) 266. Ellen Swift's article on the reuse of objects in Britain during Late Antiquity also collates an excellent range of further relevant evidence. Swift (2013).

than any cultural or sentimental meanings they might have. The desirability of the intrinsic material value of older objects is clearly seen in hoards containing hacksilver, or pieces of silver objects cut up for easy recycling or use as currency. The Traprain Law hoard from Scotland includes high quality silverware that had been cut up and circulated as a form of currency; its worth stems from the bullion value of the silver rather than any meaning the objects had within their use life.[192]

II. Objects Curated within the Home

The curation of objects within the home provides an opportunity for meanings associated with family and ancestors to accumulate as time passes. The age of certain objects can suggest their preservation within a domestic sphere. Furthermore, it seems that such objects could be of both high and low intrinsic value.

II.1. High Value Possessions

Several highly ornate glass vessels which would have been displayed or used within domestic space have been excavated from contexts in Germany, such as the engraved bowl in fig. 10. This was found in a third-century grave context (no. 1782) at Krefeld-Gellep but was seemingly already 200 years old when buried.[193] Pirling, in discussing how such an object would have survived for this amount of time, states that it would have been nearly impossible for the object to be curated through inheritance due to the upheavals of the Migration Period; instead it may have been removed from an earlier Roman grave after either accidental discovery or through the systematic searches of Roman ruins by the church which were common during this period.[194] The item might then have been kept and treasured for its unusual decoration. However, an early-fourth century cage cup from Cologne (fig. 11) also found within a grave context features missing parts that could not be found during the excavation, suggesting that the object had been damaged during the owner's life and the pieces lost.[195] Harden suggests this means the piece had been in the deceased's possession for some time, and that gaps of one hundred years between manufacture and burial are plausible as such high-class vessels are likely to have been kept and treasured within the lifetime of

[192] Hunter & Painter (2013). This volume also discusses the phenomenon of hacksilver more broadly.
[193] Pirling (1974) 175.
[194] Pirling (1974) 175, after Krämer (1965) 327.
[195] Harden (1987) 241.

the owner.[196] Certainly their age and fragility makes the gap between manufacture and deposition remarkable and burial in earlier graves before excavation and re-deposition in Late Antiquity would help to ensure the preservation of ornate glass vessels. However, the curation of such expensive and high quality items as part of the domestic material culture of a family would surely be desirable because of the meaning of the object and the wealth it stored in material terms.[197]

Silverware, especially in the form of plate used for dining, represents high status objects that functioned as heirlooms. This is known from inscriptions on certain high profile examples, which reveal the objects' association with family identity and heirloom status. The Sevso Treasure is a collection of silver vessels thought to originate from Hungary, and dates from late-fourth to early-fifth centuries.[198] The Hunting Plate (fig. 12), so-called because of the hunting scenes that decorate the rim and central medallion of the plate, features an inscription which translates as: "May these little vessels, Sevso, last you for many ages, so that they may serve your descendants worthily".[199] The inscription suggests not only that the silver items forming the hoard were given to the named Sevso as a gift, but that furthermore these objects were intended to become heirloom objects, being passed down through the family by inheritance.[200] Furthermore, technical analysis of the plate demonstrates wear marks that testify to ancient use.[201] However, regardless of whether the Hunting Plate did become an heirloom within Sevso's family, the inscription confirms that such objects were often used within domestic material culture in this specific way.

There is also the possibility that the fourth-century Esquiline Treasure, which includes the Projecta Casket, might represent a collection of household silver formed of heirloom objects, which were passed down through generations of the same family. Alan Cameron suggests this idea based upon the range of dates the objects have been assigned, and the range of monograms relating to the

[196] Harden (1987) 198.
[197] In all likelihood, the meaning of such older objects within graves varies from case to case, however even if an object is not an heirloom, it can still represent an object of personal meaning. See the discussion in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
[198] Mundell Mango (1994) 11.
[199] Dunbabin (2003b) 142. The original Latin reads: HAEC SEVSO TIBI DVRENT PER SAECVLA MVLTA POSTERIS VT PROSINT VASCVLA DIGNA TVIS.
[200] Dunbabin (2003b) 142-143.
[201] Bennett (1994) 27.

Turcii family inscribed upon the hoard pieces.[202] He proposes that the monogram of Pelegrina and Turcius on the older silverware represents the parents of Secundus, who is himself associated with the Projecta Casket through its inscription.[203] Such items would represent objects transformed through time and inheritance into heirlooms, associated with familial values and ancestor identity. Shelton (in response to Cameron's article) suggests an alternative, but not dissimilar, interpretation of the treasure objects as representing a complex social group that evokes the occasions, donors and recipients associated with the silverware.[204] Specifically Shelton mentions a silver ewer given to Pelegrina alongside the eight monogrammed plates that bear her name and that of her father.[205] Irrespective of the details of identification surrounding the persons to whom the hoard objects originally belonged, it seems clear that these objects represent family heirlooms, and consequently meaningful objects within the family's domestic material culture. Indeed, this personal familial value could be interpreted as part of the reason, beyond the intrinsic material worth of the silver itself, for the hoard's burial – that is, for safekeeping with the intention of retrieving the items at a later date. Bequests of silver within families can also be found in textual sources. Janes gives an example of a will from early seventh-century Merovingian Gaul – the will of Ermintrude of Paris.[206] In the document, she bequeaths specific items of silver to named relatives – her son received a silver pot and a silver goblet; her grandson received a silver pitcher; her granddaughter received a dish decorated with crosses.[207] Janes comments that the single items of treasure appear to represent the prominent means of bestowal of tokens of personal recognition.[208]

Heirloom objects could also be preserved and curated within specific contexts in the domestic sphere. Household shrines provided such a place, creating a sense of continuity within the material culture of the home over time. Finds of statuettes across the Empire suggest that figurines incorporated into household shrines often included heirlooms. Stirling describes how from the fourth-century house known as the Panayia Domus in Corinth comes an assemblage of statuettes

[202] Cameron (1985) 135-136.
[203] Cameron (1985) 136. The Casket's inscription reads SECVNDE ET PROIECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO, or "Secundus and Proiecta, live in Christ".
[204] Shelton (1985) 147.
[205] The ewer is associated with Pelegrina through its inscription: PELEGRINA VTERE FELIX / "Pelegrina, use this vessel to good fortune".
[206] Janes (1998b) 369-370; Pardessus (1849).
[207] Ermintrude, *Testamentum*; Pardessus (1849) 255-256.
[208] Janes (1998b) 370.

depicting a range of classical pagan figures. The collection was found within a small room thought to hold the domestic shrine, and is sealed by a destruction layer providing a *terminus ante quem* in the 360s.[209] Important for this discussion is the fact that the collections represent statuettes of a broad range of dates, including a draped figurine of Europa dating to the first to second centuries, and a head of Pan thought to also be from the second century AD.[210] Some of the statues are unfinished and the range of dates suggest they were collected together quite late; Stirling proposes that in earlier times these figurines were displayed in other rooms as a show of social standing, before the religious climate of the city of Corinth changed and made the owner uncomfortable displaying pagan images so publicly and moved them together elsewhere.[211]

Another assemblage of statues provides a different perspective. Found in the city of Aquae Tarbellicae (modern Dax in France), the group represents a collection of heirloom statuettes in a fourth-century context. On the face of it these could be interpreted as family heirlooms from a household shrine or domestic collection, similar to those from the Panayia Domus, above. However, the key feature of this assemblage is that the bronze statuettes appear to be undergoing repair for resale.[212] This is suggested by the physical state of the statues and the inclusion of tools within the assemblage; these figurines were gathered as antiques to be restored and resold.[213] This reflects the popular interest in antique and classical style objects within Late Antiquity, discussed in the introduction to this chapter. It therefore seems that these objects, whilst of significant age in the fourth century, were not heirloom objects at this stage of their life. However, this does not mean that prior to their inclusion in the assemblage, these statues did not form important objects within a home. Their survival into the fourth century, albeit damaged, suggests their intentional preservation by previous owners. These statues might well have been highly valued family heirlooms before being sold for a reason beyond our knowledge – perhaps due to the death of the owners, changes in fashion, disinterest by inheritors over their familial value, or the onset of financial hardship. The economic value of such objects would certainly make them an appealing asset to sell in times of need. Furthermore, there is also evidence suggesting that older statues and

[209] Stirling (2008) 92.
[210] Stirling (2008) 94-96.
[211] Stirling (2008) 130, 138.
[212] Stirling (2005) 84.
[213] Santrot (1996) 323.

busts were reused for reasons other than fashion and economic value. At Lullingstone Villa in Kent, the second-century owner displayed two portrait busts, presumably of his ancestors, for veneration; 100 years later at the end of the third century, the new owner of the house reused these busts in a similar display of veneration, despite them not representing his own ancestors.[214] Henig suggests that this behaviour reflects a belief in the spirits of the house, which were to be worshipped as the domestic *lares* gods.[215] This evidence provides an additional type of value that could be assigned to such reused domestic statuary. However, whatever the reason behind their appearance in the Dax assemblage, it does not remove the possibility of personal value and meaning prior to this moment.

II.2. Lower status objects

Not all heirloom statuary within household shrines was of high status. A figurine found within an early fourth-century grave at the cemetery at Baldock, Hertfordshire represents the lower spectrum of economic worth. The clay figurine (fig. 13), interred within an infant's grave, represents the goddess Dea Nutrix and was produced in central Gaul in the second century AD.[216] Despite the apparent cheapness of the figure in terms of material and manufacturing technique, its age is suggestive of the value it had during its lifetime. As a fragile object, it had been curated within the home for more than one hundred years before its deposition; Burleigh *et al* suggest that it was a treasured object taken from its domestic shrine and buried with a beloved child, the object providing comfort through its accumulated biography and association with long-dead family members.[217] This certainly seems likely. Firstly, a domestic shrine would provide a plausible context in the home in which a fairly low value object could be curated over successive generations. Its role in the shrine combined with its heirloom status would ensure preservation. Furthermore, the heirloom's connotations of family, combined with the subject of the figure would make it a suitable grave good for a child. The Dea Nutrix, or the nursing goddess, was related to concepts of motherhood and caregiving, enhancing the role it would have in accompanying the child in death. The knowledge that such an important family object would be with the deceased

[214] Henig (2005) 158.
[215] Henig (2005) 158.
[216] Burleigh, *et al* (2006) 286.
[217] Burleigh, *et al* (2006) 290.

child would no doubt also provide comfort to the surviving relatives during a distressing time for the family. Despite the high rate of childhood mortality during this period, parents would nonetheless form strong attachments to their offspring and suffer grief much as we might expect today. Whilst the death of a child was certainly not an uncommon event, scholars such as Alice-Mary Talbot have collated evidence demonstrating the grieving process and effect of such an occurrence on the surviving family. Talbot refers to late antique and Byzantine sources to reveal the pain provoked by the death of a child during this period, and the attempts at consolation made by the grief-stricken and their friends and family.[218] Behaviour such as the burial of a symbolic heirloom such as the Dea Nutrix fits well alongside such evidence.

Beyond domestic shrines, more practical reasons for the curation of low status objects as heirlooms exist. Objects that have a specific use within the home can be used continuously over long periods of time, ensuring their preservation (excluding potential breakages). Such ordinary items appear in graves from Eastern Cemetery in London, their age requiring interpretation. Grave B184 contained a Nene Valley beaker, which was at least fifty years old when it was deposited between AD 250 and 400.[219] Grave B326 at the same site contained a Cologne coated-ware beaker in an unbroken state that seems to date to between AD 100 and 140; therefore it was at least 110 years old (and possibly as much as 300 years old) at the time of deposition between AD 250 and 400.[220] The report states that there is no obvious reason for the survival of the object, which even if dated typologies are slightly inaccurate, nonetheless represents an object of significant age being included in a burial.[221] However, it is possible that this object is an heirloom item, curated within a family until the burial with the deceased. The fact that the object is of relatively low value and seemingly anomalous supports this theory since the value of such objects is subjective and cannot always be identified through material clues. Alternatively, such objects may have been excavated from other earlier graves and then reburied – an interpretation based on the comparative site of Butt Road, Colchester, where it has been suggested gravediggers disinterred earlier pots from graves to

[218] Talbot (2009) 291-98.
[219] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 151.
[220] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 175.
[221] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 175.

make them available for reuse.[222] It also seems unlikely that such everyday objects would have been heirlooms kept over long periods of time. As Barber and Bowsher discuss, roles within the home such as storage would involve a relatively immobile life for such vessels and therefore ensure preservation over a long period of time, rather than the objects representing heirlooms.[223] However this interpretation excludes the layers of meaning that such objects have. An object can be utilitarian but also have family associations. It might be curated in the home through its static storage role, but accumulate memories and heirloom status as a by-product of its semi-permanent place within the domestic material culture. Whilst it seems unlikely that such ordinary utilitarian objects functioned as heirlooms, we cannot say for sure. The reason we do not know the meaning of this object, as Maines and Glynn emphasise in their discussion of numinous objects, is because the memory of this information has been lost with the death of the owners.[224] This now absent meaning might have revealed their status as heirlooms and associations with successive generations of a family. In turn, this could have prompted their inclusion within the grave as a token of kinship, in a similar way to the Dea Nutrix figurine discussed above.

III. Objects explicitly associated with family members

III.1. Wedding & dowry objects

The marriage documents of Egypt provide information about the kinds of objects that a woman brought with her into marriage as dowry. As a result, there is a link between a bride's dowry objects and possessions that can be identified as heirlooms.[225] Yiftach-Firanko, in his study of Egyptian marriage documents up to the fourth century AD, notes that dowry objects were generally divided into the *phernê* (φερνή), which the husband controlled during the period of marriage and the value of which he had to return to the bride should the union end, and *parapherna* (παράφερνα), which broadly consisted of the wife's chattels for her own personal use, and which the husband must return the originals of on the dissolution of the marriage.[226] In Egypt during the first two centuries AD, the *parapherna* was listed separately to the main dowry portion, and usually

[222] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 122; Crummy *et al* (1993) 49.
[223] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 122.
[224] Maines & Glynn (1993) 10-11.
[225] There are also connections between objects given as wedding gifts and their transformation into heirloom objects, which is discussed more fully in the next chapter.
[226] Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 129-49.

consisted of her most precious belongings (often handed down from one generation to the next) alongside objects of daily use, to ensure they could be easily recovered should the marriage end.[227] After AD 260-61, the inclusion of *parapherna* as a separately listed set of possessions ends, and these kinds of objects become included with the *phernê*, under the proviso that any gold jewellery was inalienable and must be returned to the wife.[228]

Yiftach-Firanko also argues that dowry items functioned as heirloom objects passed down the female line of a family; the example given is from a mid second-century marriage document, which lists clothing and jewellery coming from her father as *phernê*, whilst similar objects coming from her mother are *parapherna* – suggesting their value as family chattels that pass from mother to daughter.[229] The reality of the way in which these objects remained close and specific to the bride however can be seen by the first-century example provided by Rowlandson, in which a woman complains that a builder working in her home has stolen jewellery, presumably part of a dowry, which had been secreted in a box in the wall approximately forty years earlier.[230]

Examples of possessions that formed the dowry are represented within the papyri, with jewellery of various types and styles being a very common feature. This mid-third century marriage contract lists alongside various clothing the following jewellery as dowry:

> […] the said giver contributes as the dowry of her said daughter the bride in common gold on the Oxyrhynchite standard a necklace of the kind called *maniaces,* having a stone and weighing apart from the stone 13 quarters, a brooch (?) with 5 stones set in gold, weighing apart from the stones 4 quarters, a pair of ear-rings with 10 pearls weighing apart from the pearls 3 quarters, a small ring weighing ½ quarter […][231]

The jewellery is described in terms of weight as well as appearance, and it is clear that there are several levels of value to these objects. Firstly, there is the monetary value, which is based upon the materials used and the workmanship of the object. Additional value stems from the biography of the object and its association with the event of marriage. A link can also be established between the dowry object and the concept of family memory and identity. It is this third point that I now wish

[227] Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 142.
[228] Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 144. This sentiment is echoed in the Digest of Justinian: "Although the dowry is among the husband's possessions, it is the woman's […]": *Dig. Jus*. 23.3.75; trans. Watson (1985).
[229] P.Oxy.49.3491. Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 147 n.184.
[230] Rowlandson (1998) 313; Sel.Pap. II 278. Also quoted in Yiftach-Firanko (2007) 142.
[231] P.Oxy.10.1273.

to draw out. Dowry originates from the family of the bride – the objects are transmitted from this social group to their daughter and new husband. They are therefore linked to the concept of family – both present and future. As previously mentioned, once given as dowry, they either remain with the couple as part of the new branch of family created by the marriage, or are returned to the original family.[232] In either scenario, they accumulate biography pertaining to this idea of family and the progression of a family lineage.[233] They are therefore already functioning as heirlooms within the family, referring as they do through their material history to both their origins and future generations.

Jewellery appears regularly in the documents relating to dowry and marriage. The *maniaces* necklace described in the document P.Oxy.10.1273 is a specific type that appears in various sources of evidence across the period. The second-century BC *Histories* of Polybius uses the word to describe the torcs worn by barbarians, suggesting the necklace was formed of a solid collar of metal set with a gemstone.[234] Ogden, in his PhD thesis on Graeco-Roman jewellery from Egypt, states that such an item would weigh around 22 grams, and could be a torc of gold wire or a thin rod with a stone-set pendant.[235] Examples of what *maniaces* necklaces might have looked like include the necklace depicted in the third-century mummy portrait from the Fayum in Egypt (fig. 14). The archaeological record also provides similar examples, such the gold necklace featuring a large pendant depicting the Annunciation (fig. 15), although this is approximately 300 years later in date than the papyrus document. The mosaics of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna also show the bodyguards of Justinian as wearing solid torc necklaces (fig. 16), emphasising the *maniaces* association with military insignia, something discussed by Walters in relation to depictions of Byzantine military saints.[236] The potential heirlooms *maniaces* necklace in P.Oxy.10.1273 was therefore a standard and well-known type of personal adornment.

[232] Both of these scenarios assume that the family does not sell or pawn the items of value, which would likely happen in times of financial hardship.
[233] Roman law held that marriage was a natural state, the purpose of which was to produce children and perpetuate their family line: *Dig. Jus.* 1.1.3, *Dig. Jus.* 50.16.220.3; trans. Watson (1985). See also Grubbs (2002) 81.
[234] Polybius 2.29.8; trans. Paton (1922).
[235] Ogden (1990) 192.
[236] Walter (2001).

Whilst the most obvious type of value in terms of dowry is monetary, the association between these objects, the act of marriage, and family memory suggests the potential for personal value too. Such an interpretation could similarly be read into the fifth century AD document, which lists the property that a father is trying to reclaim from his deceased daughter's husband. The items include rather mundane domestic objects such as frying pans and tools, alongside more recognisable dowry items such as clothing, a necklace and "pendant earrings".[237] It was usual for the family of the bride to reclaim their lost dowry on the bride's death; the Digest of Justinian states that the recovery by a father will provide him comfort, "in order that he not feel the loss of both his deceased daughter and his money."[238] It is however also likely that these objects had some sentimental value as objects associated with the family, even more so after the loss of their daughter, and thus further fuelled their desire to reclaim them. That relatively small, personal possessions were associated with women can also be found elsewhere in the late antique period. Wemple notes that in Germanic societies, women were especially associated with moveable property through their ownership of dowries.[239]

III.2. Jewellery

Other sources of evidence further reinforce this association between heirloom jewellery and late antique marriage. The role of these objects is seen in writer Claudian's description in 398 of the pre-nuptial gift given by the Emperor Honorius to Maria, daughter of Stilicho:

> Already he prepares gifts for his betrothed and selects to adorn her (though their beauty is less than hers) the jewels once worn by noble Livia of old and all the proud women of the imperial house.[240]

This heirloom jewellery is being given as a gift prior to marriage (a topic that is explored in more detail in the next chapter); as such the association between its meaning and the union of Honorius and Maria is significant. Heirlooms represent familial continuity and, especially within an imperial marriage, such a gift has powerful connotations of genealogical legitimisation. Within Claudian's text, the jewels supposedly belonged to Livia, the famous and powerful wife of Emperor Augustus

[237] P.Princ. 2.95.
[238] *Dig. Jus.* 23.3.6; trans. Watson (1985).
[239] Wemple (1981) 46.
[240] Claudian, *Epithalamium* 10.10-15; trans. Platnauer (1990).

in the first century BC; furthermore Claudian implies that they had subsequently been owned by a series of other imperial women. The act of passing the jewellery to his wife-to-be as a gift symbolises her future role as an imperial matriarch, referring to historical authority through the heirloom to ensure the security of their future. We of course do not know for certain whether Livia's jewellery was indeed gifted to Maria, or whether this jewellery did in fact once belong to earlier imperial women – although details of the 16th century excavation of Maria's imperial tomb in Rome record the presence of an abundance of precious jewellery thought to have been her wedding gifts, almost all of which have since disappeared.[241] However, to a certain extent, the authenticity of these gifts is not relevant; the inclusion of this description within Claudian's text demonstrates that such cultural practices were known and had a function within this period. Such overtly dynastic acts of inheritance on the occasion of marriage are likely to have been present in unions in lower status families, with heirloom objects holding an important role in the symbolism of the act.

The Hoxne Roman treasure, found in Britain in 1992, features a variety of gold jewellery. One specific example, the gold body chain (fig. 17), seems likely to have once formed either part of a dowry or have been originally intended as a wedding piece. Johns interprets this object as suitable for a bride: she argues it has erotic associations when worn (by emphasising the breasts), and its small size suggests it was worn by an adolescent, as opposed to a mature, woman.[242] Such features would certainly correspond to a potential role as a wedding piece – its connotations would be suitable for such an occasion, and its size corresponds to contemporary social practices, as the minimum age for girls at marriage was 12 and the majority of brides were young.[243] The chain also features a coin, the mount of which (when seen under magnification) has been modified from an earlier setting of the third century.[244] This early setting therefore suggests that it held a coin earlier than the present *solidus* of Gratian, which was incorporated when the body chain as a whole was manufactured in the fourth century.[245] John's study of this object leads her to conclude that the chain was likely made to order and that the modified mount represents the inclusion of an older

[241] Lanciani (1892) 203-205.
[242] Johns (2010) 27.
[243] Nathan (2000) 16. *Dig. Jus.* 23.2.4; trans. Watson (1985).
[244] Johns (2010) 28.
[245] Johns (2010) 28.

piece of jewellery within the piece, rather than simply creating a new mount for a contemporary coin.[246] As such, the Hoxne body chain might represent the modification of an heirloom object for the occasion of a wedding.

This interpretation is supported by Bruhn's study of numismatic jewellery, which shows that such objects were very common in the late antique period.[247] She emphasises the tradition of this style of jewellery being passed down through families as heirlooms, quoting the second-century jurist Pomponius who stated that it was possible to bequeath such items as a legacy and that such coins were often already of great age.[248] This evidence allows an interpretation of coin-set jewellery more broadly as heirlooms, referencing ancestors within their biography and family identity as they are bequeathed and inherited. Specific examples of older coins that have been set into newer pieces of jewellery can be found in museum collections and excavation reports.[249] Fig. 18 is a coin-set finger ring, now in the British Museum. It is dated on style to the fourth century, however the coin it features is an *aureus*, the standard Roman gold coin, from the reign of Alexander Severus, emperor from 222 to 235.[250] The coin was clearly of some significant age when it was set into the ring; this gap in time between the manufacture of the coin, and the jewellery suggests that it could well be an heirloom piece as Pomponius described. Several other examples suggest that this was common practice: from Abuqir, in Egypt, is a necklace dated to the late third or fourth century on style, but features twelve gold *aurei* the latest of which is from the reign of Gordian III (AD 238-244).[251] There is also the necklace from the Netherlands which features a coin pendant formed of an *aureus* of Victorinus (268-270 AD); whilst the coin dates from the third century, it seems that it was mounted in the pendant much later, perhaps at the end of the fourth or during the fifth century AD.[252] Finally, there is the example from Grave 6.113 at Pessinus, central Anatolia, dating to the fourth century AD; the burial included a late Roman gold pendant containing a much-worn Greek

[246] Johns (2010) 28.
[247] Bruhn (1993) 2.
[248] Bruhn (1993) 1; *Dig. Jus.* 7.1.28; trans. Watson (1985). It should be noted that another interpretation of the Latin is that it refers to gold coins being used as raw materials for jewellery: see Ogden (1990) 197.
[249] Roman coins from the fourth century are also attested in Anglo Saxon graves in Britain as part of female jewellery, signalling that these coins were either consciously kept from the Roman period, or were rediscovered at a later date and then reused. See Swift (2013) 100-1.
[250] Sas & Thoen (2002) 230.
[251] Vermeule (1975) 18-20.
[252] Sas & Thoen (2002) 231.

silver *drachma* coin, minted by Alexander III or Philippus III of Macedonia during the second half of the fourth century BC.[253] In light of this evidence, the Hoxne body chain, with the inclusion of its antique coin and setting, can be interpreted as a potential heirloom and functioning in a similar way to Livia's necklace. If such an interpretation were correct, the chain's association with this important life event would associate the object with memories of the occasion for the wearer. Such a biographical trajectory for this object seems plausible since, as Swift explains, dress accessories such as jewellery are suitable heirloom objects as they are associated with specific members of a family before being inherited by the next generation.[254]

The role of coins, and coin set jewellery, as heirlooms also needs to be explored further. Money was often given as a gift both at weddings and other events like the Kalends Festival, something discussed in more depth in the next chapter.[255] Could coins received on such occasions be incorporated into jewellery in order to keep them? It would be one way of fixing personal wealth in a material sense, whilst simultaneously preserving the sentimental value of a gift given on a special occasion. In addition, coins had values other than their monetary worth, providing a reason to preserve and curate them within jewellery; this in turn allowed them to become heirlooms as time passed and meanings accumulated. For example, coins could be magical amulets. As Maguire explains in his paper on the subject, coins were considered to have supernatural powers, which were derived from the presence of the imperial portrait and the precious material from which they were made.[256] To own coin-set jewellery that functioned as an amulet would certainly provide an excellent reason for the owner to keep the object and pass it on for the use of future generations as an heirloom possession. Coins and coin set jewellery might be kept and reused for more pragmatic reasons. For example, coins can include a figurative image that could be used decoratively. The presence of such items of jewellery in hoard and grave contexts suggests that these were indeed valued objects; it is likely that some represent treasured family heirlooms whereas others include coins reset by jewellers in response to their popularity in contemporary material culture. For

[253] Thoen (2003) 98.
[254] Swift (2013) 109.
[255] For weddings, see P.Flor.3.332. Also Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman Antiquities* 14.24; trans. Rolfe (1935). For the Kalends, see Asterius, *Hom. 4;* trans. Anderson & Goodspeed (1904). The giving of coins at Kalends is also further discussed in the next chapter. See chapter 4, section II.2.
[256] Maguire (1997) 1039.

example, Vermeule lists a first- to second-century *aureus* of Trajan which was mounted for suspension in the third century; this coin was likely chosen because of the contemporary pertinence of its image of Trajan and his title PARTHICO, referring to his conquests in Parthia against whom the Empire was again battling in the third century.[257] It is important to remember however that all items of jewellery have the potential to be highly personal possessions, and that they are intended to be worn on the body, as well as being stored within homes. Therefore they can be closely tied to their owners and as heirlooms powerfully manifest the identities of their previous owners regardless of any other messages the object might communicate.

Leader-Newby also refers to the non-financial attitudes towards coins present in the late antique period in light of work by Hendy. In her discussion, coins are interpreted as objects of display rather than tools of commerce; they are a means to circulate the imperial image and to display the wealth of the owner (or wearer in the case of coin-set jewellery).[258] Following Hendy's discussion of later Byzantine attitudes towards currency, she explains that wealth is most commonly expressed through land, buildings, and luxury moveable possessions such as jewellery, plate and clothing, whereas coinage could not so effectively express status or the possession of wealth.[259] As such the incorporation of coins into jewellery can be seen as an attempt to rectify the 'undisplayability' of money, thereby transforming coins into the actual wealth that they represented.[260] Both of these extra-monetary schemes of value in coins give solid reasoning for not only the inclusion of coins within personal jewellery, but also their curation over long periods of time and potential status as heirloom objects.

As well as coins, engraved gems found in late antique assemblages or set into late antique jewellery often represent objects from an earlier period of time. For example, the Thetford Treasure contains five fourth-century rings set with first- to third-century intaglios. Importantly, this collection has been interpreted as a jewellers hoard intended for resale, and therefore it is unlikely that at the time of burial the gems were primarily heirloom objects; their dominant value in this context and the

[257] Vermeule (1975) 10.
[258] Leader-Newby (2004) 26.
[259] Leader-Newby (2004) 26-7; Hendy (2008) 219.
[260] Leader-Newby (2004) 27.

reason for their assemblage comes from their appealing colour and suitability for reuse, rather than any sentimental value or associations with family.[261] However, their inclusion in the hoard does not preclude their previous status as heirlooms for their former owners. Their age again suggests curation, which could well be due to their role as heirlooms within a domestic sphere.

In addition, there is textual evidence from the sixth century that describes gems as heirlooms. The civil servant John Lydus describes some heirloom objects that belonged to a high status local man of Philadelphia (Lydia) in his discussion of the corrupt behaviour of some imperial officials:

> A certain Petronius in my Philadelphia […] was the possessor of precious stones from his ancestors, which were numerous and at the same time kept from sight of private individuals because of their beauty and size.[262]

These stones were clearly valuable objects, notable not only for their apparent significance in terms of size and appearance, but also because of their identity as having belonged to the man's "ancestors". Their description suggests that these were gems of some kind – either semi-precious stones or perhaps engraved gems. Whilst it is unclear whether the stones John Lydus refers to were indeed specifically engraved gems, we nonetheless have evidence of similar objects being inherited and valued as heirlooms within families. The fact that the description includes reference to these precious objects not being on display – "kept from sight of private individuals" – means that their value in part stemmed from their biography and intrinsic worth. They were not displayed, suggesting that their value did not primarily arise from their use in domestic displays of status. Instead their value comes from not only their intrinsic worth but also their identity as heirloom objects, which reference the ancestors of the owner's family.

In the archaeological record, similar jewellery featuring old engraved gems can be found in grave contexts. At the town of Xanten on the lower Rhine, a late fourth-century grave found under the cathedral of St Viktor contained a finger ring with a first-century carnelian gem depicting the goddess Nemesis.[263] Excavations at the Roman Eastern Cemetery in London reveal similar depositions. Grave B291 included a chalcedony intaglio engraved with a grazing cow or bull;

[261] Platz-Horster (2011) 225.
[262] John Lydus, *Mag.* 3.59; trans. Bandy (1983).
[263] Platz-Horster (2009) 159.

thought to date from the first century AD, it was buried in the third or fourth centuries.[264] The excavators have interpreted this as a personal object of the kind that would be bequeathed from generation to generation, hence the object's survival.[265] This in itself seems to suggest that the item had a specific value to the people buried in the graves, but not necessarily that it was an heirloom. Indeed, Platz-Horster states that the material worth of older items made them popular in times of uncertainty, especially on the frontiers and border regions of the Empire.[266] Furthermore, the skills of engraving gems declined during the late antique period, meaning that older gems were reused in jewellery instead of new carvings being made.[267] However, like the glass vessels found in grave contexts discussed earlier, the heirloom status of such objects would help to ensure the preservation via curation of older objects within the home, allowing their use life to be extended and making them available for reuse at a later date.

III.3. Clothing

Clothing and garments are closely tied to the identities of those who wore them, again functioning as a material embodiment for accumulated memories as they are passed through families as heirlooms. Similar behaviour can be witnessed in modern times in the heirloom quilts in North America; these objects have sentimental value stemming from the memories tied to the pieces of cloth (often from clothing) that are preserved within the body of the quilt.[268] The fourth-century *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, a collection of biographies of Roman imperial figures, describes the bequest of family clothing as inheritance. It describes Junius Messalla's apparent squandering of family heirlooms by giving them to actors rather than his own heirs:

> For he has cut off his natural heirs and bestowed his ancestral fortune on players, giving a tunic of his mother's to an actress and a cloak of his father's to an actor — and rightly so, I suppose, if a gold and purple mantle of his grandmother's could be used as a costume by a tragic actor! Indeed, the name of Messalla's wife is still embroidered on the violet mantle of a flute-player, who exults in it as the spoils of a noble house. Why, now, should I speak of those linen garments imported from Egypt? Why of those garments from Tyre and Sidon, so fine and transparent, of gleaming purple and famed for their embroidery-work? He has presented, besides, capes brought from the Atrabati and capes from Canusium and Africa, such splendour as never before was seen on the stage. All of this I have put into writing in order that future givers of spectacles may be touched by a sense of shame and so

[264] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 165-66.
[265] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 168.
[266] Platz-Horster (2011) 226
[267] Sena Chiesa (2011) 229.
[268] Gordon & Horton (2009) 96, 100-101.

> be deterred from cutting off their lawful heirs and squandering their inheritances on actors and mountebanks.[269]

The clothing is explicitly described as forming Messalla's ancestral fortune, giving great value to the objects the text describes. They are clearly high quality garments, notable not only for their superior colour, materials, and workmanship, but also their previous owners (and by extension age). Therefore their evident value comes not only from the high status of these objects in material terms but also their familial provenance, from which their importance as heirlooms arises. In a literal sense, the history of the clothing is inscribed upon the surface of the material, in the form of the embroidered name of Messalla's wife on the purple mantle. In light of this, the more ordinary clothing found in the documentary papyri from Egypt can also be interpreted cherished as heirloom objects. For example, P.Oxy.14.1645 is a fourth-century receipt for some personal effects received by a woman from her deceased mother; the list includes a worn child's frock.[270] Such an item can thus represent a tangible memento of the mother, from whom she inherits the garment, despite its apparent worn condition. This is supported by evidence from the literature of the early Christian monks, discussed further in chapter 6 of this thesis, in which a monk named Daniel inherits the leather tunic, hair shirt and sandals of an elderly monk.[271]

III.4. Other personal possessions

Other documents describing the possessions bequeathed to heirs on the death of a relative demonstrate the broad range of objects that had the potential to become family heirlooms. The will of a centurion dated to AD 320 lists the possessions bequeathed to seven different heirs on the occasion of his death. Alongside various amounts of money, the items to be inherited include:

> Horse…calf, 1; weapon, 1; pole, 1; *alabandicum*, 1; breastplate, 1; hatchet, 1; cloak, 1; another hatchet, …1; sacks, haircloth, 2; *thallion*, likewise haircloth, 1; small saddlebag, haircloth, 1; saddlebag, leather, …belt, likewise, 1; bronze table, 1; small measure, likewise bronze, 1 […][272]

[269] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961).
[270] P.Oxy.14.1645.
[271] AP Arsenius 42; trans. Ward (1984) 19. See chapter 6, section III.6.
[272] P.Col.7.188, 216.

The majority of the material contents of this will are of a distinctly everyday nature and formed of domestic furnishings and utilitarian objects, whilst the weapons and armour reflect his employment in the army. The fourth-century receipt P.Oxy.14.1645 (mentioned above) lists in addition to clothing an amount of gold and silver and, "[…] a wooden bed, 2 small worn cushions, 2 worn mattresses, a partly worn undyed…, a lampstand, a small table, a worn child's frock […]".[273] We can see that the reality of objects left as inheritance were not exclusively the prestigious, high value objects that we might expect.

Of course, not all of these rather ordinary sounding domestic objects would inevitably become what we consider to be 'heirlooms', with the value that accompanies such a status. Many items may not have been kept at all depending on their condition. Other items might also be discarded or sold on if they had no relevant use for the new owners. However, the biographies of these objects mean that any one of them has the potential for singularisation, and as such could be removed from the commodity sphere. As possessions of a close and recently deceased relative, it seems likely that the heirs if possible would keep some of these objects for sentimental reasons, irrespective of the monetary value of the items. These objects function as mementoes of the dead person, containing memories through their material form that resonate with the new owner. They also represent the continuity of familial relationships that function through the inherited objects after the death of the previous owner. Such items might be closely linked with the identity of the deceased (or perhaps even the family more broadly); in the case of the centurion this could be his weaponry, which reflected his status and employment in life. Swords are known elsewhere in this period as heirlooms and treasured objects, in particular within Germanic tribes in the Northern reaches of the Empire. In late Roman men's graves in Northern Gaul the presence of weapons as grave goods underlines the martial prowess of the deceased.[274] They were also often heirloom objects within Anglo Saxon society.[275]

[273] P.Oxy.14.1645.
[274] Theuws & Alkemade (2000) 411.
[275] Most famously, Beowulf contains references to heirloom swords of great value. See lines 1455 & 1557; Alexander (1973). See also Härke (1990) for heirloom swords deposited in Anglo Saxon graves in Britain.

III.5. Texts as Heirlooms

Much of the evidence discussed within this chapter has come from textual sources, in particular the documentary papyri. Whilst so far it has been the contents of these texts that have been used as evidence, their role as objects with the potential to become heirlooms themselves will now be assessed.

When looking at the evidence of papyrological documents, the fact that many were found in rubbish dumps would seem to suggest that they were not considered to be valued possessions, hence their disposal. However, such an interpretation excludes the fact that these documents may well have been treasured domestic items for a period of time before they were thrown away. These discarded documents are sometimes found together with other texts from the same household, giving us an idea of the kinds of documents that were curated within the home. Usually official documents that related to the family and its financial and legal status were kept for a long time.[276] Such valuable documents were usually stored safely away from intruders in sheltered locations within the home, such as in jars, under stairs, beneath doorsteps, or in cellars.[277] Therefore it seems that many documents experienced a period of time during which they were a semi-permanent part of domestic material culture.

Examples of family archives have been found across Egypt and provide direct evidence of the inheritance of documents. Collections of documentary papyri were inherited and added to by subsequent generations of the family; for example, the sixth-century archive of Dioscorus contains several documents relating to Dioscorus' father Appollos.[278] As stated above, the majority of texts in such collections represent official or legal documents that have a value directly pertaining to the financial and social well-being of the household and its members. However, documents with sentimental value might also have been included in such family archives. There is evidence of more informal texts being preserved alongside official documents. Some examples that we have date from before the late antique period, however it is worth mentioning them in this context to underline the potential scope of valued texts in the home. The archive of Amenothes dates from the

[276] Bagnall (2011) 132.
[277] Vandorpe (2009) 219.
[278] MacCoull (1988) 20.

second century BC and includes a list of the birthdays of his children, written in Demotic Greek.[279] Similarly Ptolemaios kept the schoolwork of his younger brother Apollonios in an archive with more official documents, also in the second century BC.[280] Many examples of texts that have been interpreted as school exercises have been found from the late antique period. In fact a sixth-century document, the biography of the orator Isocrates, is thought to represent a school text and was found within the archive of Dioscorus.[281] The archive also contains a number of poems, usually giving praise to official figures, which were written by Dioscorus himself and might represent texts kept for sentimental reasons rather than any intrinsic value.[282]

There is also evidence from the reuse of papyri that suggests documents were kept for varying lengths of time. The letter of Nicanor dates from the late second to third century and, through its reuse, provides evidence of the curation of documents.[283] The text is a letter requesting the recipient's help in recovering some lost items of clothing, and is written on the verso of the papyrus. On the recto, however, the remains of a column of accounts from the second-century can be read. This would suggest the original document was kept for a period of around one hundred years before it was reused; additionally the verso also has signs of reuse including the earlier text's date of the twenty-first year of Commodus, the equivalent of around AD 180. Of course, we cannot know exactly why the document was kept before being reused; it might well have been for sentimental reasons, however given that the earliest text was a set of accounts this argument seems unlikely. It could rather be that the piece of papyrus was kept purely for its reuse value; something that the repeated recycling of the material itself suggests. This was not an unusual practice; such palimpsest documents, where the papyrus or parchment is repeatedly cleansed of a previous text and reused, became more common in Late Antiquity when papyrus was expensive and often scarce.[284] So the reuse of a piece of papyrus does not necessarily indicate curation of a document, but instead perhaps the curation of a valued material. Furthermore, especially in the largely treeless

[279] P.Tor.Amen.3.
[280] UPZ I 147.
[281] P.Cair.Masp.2.67175.
[282] See for example P.Cair.Masp.1.67120v, written on the same piece of papyrus as a contract. The verses celebrate the family of the dux Callinicus.
[283] P.Oxy.6.929.
[284] Avrin (1991) 149.

landscapes of Egypt, papyrus made an effective fuel when burnt.[285] Therefore a preserved cache of documents, such as those found in the storeroom known as the Cantina dei Papyri in Tebtunis, Egypt, can instead reflect their being saved for fuel or reuse rather than being kept for their personal or documentary value.[286]

Overall, it seems possible that documents were preserved and passed on as heirlooms within families, although the evidence is not conclusive. In terms of correspondence, well-known literary figures are recorded as keeping copies of letters. For example in the fourth century, Libanius stored both his previous letters and speeches for copying.[287] The problem is that such evidence refers to literary letters copied by their authors in order to distribute the work more widely, rather than the more personal correspondence that is normally attested in the documentary papyri record. This means it is again unclear whether such documents would have been kept within the home. Personal texts can be identified and, through prosopography (the study of individuals and their relationships), recognised as belonging to earlier members of the same family. With regards to books and literary texts however, it is difficult to distinguish between antiques and heirlooms within the home. It is likely that documents, including private letters, were kept for all permutations of value, including their heirloom status. Therefore such objects could represent a transient but meaningful section of late antique domestic material culture.

IV. Discussion

This chapter set out to identify the kinds of objects that became heirlooms in Late Antiquity, and the contexts in which such meaning was created. An examination of the evidence demonstrates that various kinds of objects were heirlooms, whose appearance in the sources of evidence usually corresponds to significant events within the lives of people.

IV.1. The creation and context of meaning

Heirloom objects are preserved and transferred from generation to generation within a family – this is where their meaning comes from. The biography of such an object allows the possession to

[285] Bagnall (2011) 118.
[286] Gallazzi (1990) 284
[287] Libanius, *Ep.* 744.5, 877.3, 1307, 1264; ed. Foerster (1963). See also Norman (1960) 125.

represent and become entangled with the identities of previous and current owners.[288] It is less clear whether the majority of heirlooms were acquired to function explicitly as such, or whether their associations with family and ancestral identity grew as a secondary consequence of their curation. The evidence shows that there were certainly contexts within the home in which objects could be preserved over long periods of time – for example as part of a domestic shrine assemblage or through practical uses such as storage, as discussed above. The heirloom status of such objects can often be interpreted as a secondary development, with accumulated meanings incidental to their primary function. However, it is also clear that objects were acquired to explicitly function as heirlooms. This is something indicated by inscriptions on objects suggesting their primary role as such – notably the Hunting Plate from the Sevso Treasure – and also the integration of specific kinds of objects, for example jewellery, into important events such as marriages or death rituals. Thus, it seems that there were both formal and informal structures of meaning that relate to late antique heirlooms. Meaning could be created through intentional curation, or as a by-product of an object's long life within a single family.

In terms of evidence, the clearest for heirlooms relates to specific important events within the course of human life, in particular marriage and death. In the textual sources, heirloom objects often appear in relation to marriages. In the archaeological record, grave contexts show a correlation between heirlooms and the death of a family member. The transference of heirloom objects is appropriate on these occasions; both marriage and death mark the accession of the new generation within a family and the passing of the old. As has already been discussed, heirlooms embody in a material sense their previous owners and work to contract time, bringing the past, present and future generations of a family into contact. It is therefore appropriate to have heirloom objects play a role within events that mark movements in and out of the active realm of the family. Weddings and funerals are liminal moments in lives of individuals, and mark the movement of a person from one state to another: from child to adult, or living to dead. By including heirloom objects in such significant biographical moments, meaning is both created and confirmed, reinforcing the importance of the object to the identity of the family.

[288] Graeber (2001) 93. See chapter 2 of this thesis for a full discussion of the relevant theory.

The inclusion of heirlooms within funerary contexts is also interesting and requires discussion. When found within a grave, the intentional deposition of the object can be interpreted as marking an end of its use life. The meaning of an heirloom is reliant upon the continued curation of an object within a family, with its status dependent upon the knowledge of the object's history. Once removed from the closed sphere of exchange that is inheritance, heirloom objects no longer function as such. They can no longer contain memories of past generations or represent family identity in material form, as there is no interaction between the material object and the people for whom it has been invested with memories. Such interment might therefore be interpreted as the removal of significance for the heirloom, as future generations are denied access to it. More pragmatically, it might suggest that there are no future generations to whom the object can be bequeathed, although it seems likely that in such circumstances the more expensive items would be sold. However, their burial with their owner can also signal that they are particularly cherished objects and representative of the dead person's family identity. Such reasoning explains why they are chosen for inclusion in the grave to accompany the deceased. The inclusion of familiar heirloom objects in the grave could be intended to provide company and comfort to the dead. Such action can also provide comfort to the living relatives left behind; they are unable to accompany the deceased, however through the materiality of the object placed within the grave, part of the family will always be with them, providing a surrogate presence and a sense of genealogical continuity in the face of death.

The presence of heirlooms within marriage contexts can also be interpreted similarly. Specifically, highly personal objects such as jewellery and clothing represent traditional heirlooms within the sources. As such, past generations can be seen as present on such important family occasions. Personal items of dress can serve as reminders of past relatives in an active sense; they are not just seen, they are *worn*. A sense of continuity is also created should any of the heirlooms be worn during the wedding itself – as may have occurred with the Hoxne body chain. Such behaviour represents a repetition and perpetuation of family events through the presence of the same objects at the same ceremony at different times; they symbolically represent and confirm the hope for continued generations.

IV.2. Issues of Value

The evidence shows that the most prominent heirlooms were high value objects – either in terms of material worth, or the workmanship put into their creation. This might be partly due to the nature of the sources; such objects are easier to spot within the archaeological record, and are comment-worthy within contemporary textual sources. As well personal meaning, high value possessions often speak of their owner's social status, a popular topic in contemporary scholarship. However, it is also unsurprising that heirlooms were often prestigious objects; their valuable materials or high status workmanship provided the impetus for the curation of an object in a domestic context. Furthermore, there is also a relationship between high value materials and the significance of the object's meaning. Precious materials such as gold, silver, and ivory reflect the status of symbolic or sentimental meanings of heirlooms, hence their common association with events such as births, marriages, and anniversaries.[289] In this way precious materials are used to represent the important but immaterial concepts represented by such heirloom objects.

Textual sources reveal the ways in which certain materials were valued, helping us to understand why they were deemed role as appropriate for heirloom objects. Pliny, in his discussion of why gold is deemed so valuable a material, notes the metal's imperviousness to fire and rust, and its purity, malleability, and hard-wearing nature.[290] Janes further explains that the metal's scarcity meant it was designated an 'elite' substance, with connotations of power and prestige.[291] All of these factors can be understood as contributing to the metal's suitability for important personal objects. To look at an example, the gold of dowry jewellery has a high economic value (underlined by the details of weight that accompany most late antique documentary descriptions); as such it is understood as something not only worthy of being passed down through the family, but also worthy of embodying the important meanings relating to family, identity, and memory.

[289] A modern example demonstrating the link between sentimental and intrinsic value in jewellery is related by Johns; she describes a highstreet jewellers whose confession that their low prices reflected low quality gold and workmanship, led to public outcry over the perceived devaluation of sentimental pieces of jewellery. Johns (1996) 6.
[290] Pliny, *HN* 33.19; trans. Rackham (1961).
[291] Janes (1998a) 19.

It is however important to look beyond the precious metals and jewels – the personal ornaments, silver plate, and bronzes in the sources – to consider the value of other heirloom objects. Textiles during Late Antiquity also represented expensive possessions. The production of fabric and clothing was labour intensive, and as such represented serious investments of money for their owners.[292] The early fourth-century pawnbrokers account from Philadelphia consists largely of clothing, emphasising the economic value of such possessions.[293] Messalla's inherited clothing, described in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* as featuring the additional expensive materials of gold and purple, can be understood as luxurious items in the extreme.[294] It also suggests that the clothing within the documentary lists of possessions of the recently dead were more valuable than their worn description might initially imply to modern eyes.

Objects of high economic worth seem to thus correspond to the formal creation of heirlooms and their accumulation of meaning and memories within the home. Such objects are either purchased explicitly as heirloom objects, or are passed down through families as their value makes them suitable heirlooms and ensures their domestic curation. By this reasoning, lower value objects would therefore seem to correspond to the more informal creation of heirlooms discussed above. What is notable in many of the more ordinary heirlooms– for example the cooking wares mentioned in the wills and the pottery from the graves of Roman London – is that they are not primarily intended for display. They do not showcase wealth embodied by their material fabric or the skill of production that might allude to the social standing and prestige of the owning family. Their meaning is accumulated as a by-product of continued ownership and use within the home. As such their heirloom status can be considered a more private kind of value – one that only corresponds to the family members who are familiar with the object and know its biography.

Of course, it must be noted that value is a relative concept. The most prized possession for a family of lesser economic means may not reflect the evidence for heirloom objects collated here. It does not however mean that heirloom objects were available to only a section of the population who could afford them. The meaning embodied by an heirloom stems primarily from its biography,

[292] Croom (2010) 28.
[293] SB 8.9834b.
[294] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961).

therefore lower quality items – such as the clay Dea Nutrix figure – could also fulfil a role similar to the more expensive statuettes from the Panayia Domus. Similar scales of value can be seen in a comparison between the Hunting Plate of the Sevso Treasure and the Esquiline Treasure's Projecta Casket. The items of the Sevso Treasure are notable for their large dimensions, weights, and variety of silver-working techniques in the plentiful decoration.[295] The Projecta Casket, despite its lavish gilding and silver work, seems of relatively unexceptional craft considering the nature of the finished object, and is likely an imitation of court style rather than a truly aristocratic-level commission.[296] This demonstrates the differences in levels of quality between heirloom objects that initially seem on a par. In fact, according to Alan Cameron, silver may not even have been that valuable or exclusive a material.[297] Even if this is true, it was no doubt still beyond the means of a huge section of late antique society, hence the creations of imitations of silverware in glass (and likely other materials that have now perished) within the archaeological record.[298]

The evidence for texts as heirlooms provides an interesting interjection in the discussion of value. Documents have no real intrinsic value (other than the modest resale value of papyri for use in palimpsest texts), but when in the form of land ownership documents or lucrative contracts they simultaneously represent objects of very high economic worth. They are precious possessions because of the information they contain, which provides reason for their subsequent curation within the home, potentially across generations of the same family. However it can be difficult to envisage such documents as acquiring the status of heirlooms, with the sentimental value that accompanies such a role, in the same way that other objects did. We need to consider why that might be. Firstly, these are pragmatic documents whose primary value stems from their recording of valuable information; as such they can be seen as similar to the pottery storage vessels mentioned above as they are essentially a repository for information. However, unlike those vessels, these documents were unlikely to be seen on a daily basis and therefore would not have been part of the visible material culture of the home. Instead, textual archives were often kept within containers such as

[295] Mundell Mango (1994) 11.
[296] Elsner (2003) 24.
[297] Cameron (1992) 185.
[298] Fleming (1999) 109.

vessels or hidden away in enclosed parts of the home.[299] As such, it is likely that members of the household did not consider themselves to have an active relationship with these possessions, meaning that it could be more difficult for memories and family identities to be associated with them as heirloom objects. These possessions can therefore be understood as passive rather than active – not all of these documents would be regularly seen or read by family members. All of these factors suggest that these possessions, whilst potentially curated over long periods of time within one family, were unlikely to possess the same sorts of meaning and value as other family heirlooms.

However, the alternative view also needs to be considered. It might conversely be the case that these kinds of documentary texts could become family heirlooms through their role within the narrative of the family's identity. Texts recording the acquisition of – for example – a family home, a family business or the freedom of a former slave all represent significant moments within the life of a single family unit over successive generations. As such, they are indeed able to function as typical heirlooms, representing past and future generations and safeguarding the sense of genealogical continuity despite the fact they might not always be visible to members of the household. This echoes the evidence for other more typical heirlooms, for example the precious stones hidden away in the description from John Lydus. Similarly, the jewellery belonging to the Hoxne Hoard seems to have been removed from the active sphere of the household and stored safely away – however this semi-retirement from the daily life of a household does not preclude the presence of sentimental meaning in any of the heirloom objects.[300]

These kinds of documents can also be contrasted with other types of private document. The papyrological record contains a significant number of texts that could easily accumulate sentimental value; an obvious example is the thousands of private letters from the period that have survived to today. Their value comes from the material association with the sender and the contents of the letter. Within the home, these texts might be considered as more active – available to be read and re-read as mementoes by the members of the household. Such actions would elicit feelings of

[299] Vandorpe (2009) 219.
[300] Johns (2010) 59.

nostalgia or memories of a person, place or event from the past. Similarly literary texts would plausibly be read and re-read for pleasure, creating active relationships between the owner and possession.

IV.3. The transmission of heirlooms within families

Certain of the sources used in this chapter provide information of the movement of heirlooms within a family. Usually this is in the form of details surrounding the transmission of objects between people and the circumstances on which these movements occur. The collation of this evidence will allow for a discussion surrounding who gave and received heirlooms within a family, and whether we can draw any conclusions from it.

The evidence relating to the movement of heirlooms through dowries and marriage strongly represents the role of women in such transactions. This is of course to be expected, as dowries were by their very nature linked to the bride and provided by her family. As such, it is not unexpected to see in the third-century P.Oxy.10.1273 the transmission of the typical dowry goods of clothing and jewellery from mother to daughter on the occasion of her marriage. Claudian's description of the gift to Maria of imperial heirloom jewellery is an interesting deviation from this pattern. The donation occurs before their wedding, therefore this act represents the movement of the heirloom beyond the family. However, the giving of the jewellery was done in anticipation of the incorporation of Maria's identity into the imperial family. No doubt the expectation was that she would in turn pass the necklace on to her own heirs in due course, thus continuing the imperial line that is itself represented by the heirloom object and its transmission to her. It changes Maria's identity from that of an outsider to a legitimate family member, comparing her with her female imperial predecessors who are invoked through their previous ownership of the object. This source also intersects with the practice of gift giving between betrothed couples and spouses, discussed in in the next chapter. The evidence suggests that there is potential for heirlooms to be given as gifts and for gifts to become heirlooms – as suggested by the inscription on the Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate – and that these objects can have both origins and destinations outside beyond the family lineage.

Within the sources on wills and inheritance, the movement of possessions is exclusively within families. We see in the *Testamentum* of Ermintrude that she bequeaths very specific items of silver to her son, grandson, and granddaughter on the occasion of her death. This represents the expected transmission of personal objects to younger generations of a family at the death of an elder relative. That such objects could be identified singly within the will suggests that they were recognisable and perhaps important family possessions familiar to those receiving them as an inheritance. However they are in general of a higher quality than the objects mentioned within the wills and receipts found in the papyrological record. In these records a lower level of affluence often seems to be represented, or at the least a broader range of objects.

For example, the receipt from AD 308 for the personal effects of a deceased woman records the movement of possessions from a dead mother to her daughter. The objects range from items of gold and silver to household equipment such as soft furnishings and furniture. These kinds of possessions echo those being reclaimed by the father of a recently deceased woman in the fifth-century P.Princ.2.95 – this list includes valuable objects of gold and bronze as well as household equipment and furnishings. The centurion's will from AD 320 (P.Col. 7.188) lists seven heirs who will receive his property at his death – his possessions were to be equally shared amongst his wife, daughter and five brothers and sisters. Again we see possessions broad in their scope encompassing household objects, money, livestock and weaponry. Turning to literary sources, we see that Messalla is described as owning clothing once possessed by close relatives, including his wife.[301] Their proper role as heirloom objects and their rightful place within the family is underlined by the horror at his giving them to actors beyond the family, thus belittling their value and spurning his own heirs. The text lists the objects as mainly being received from his female relatives – his grandmother, mother and wife. This suggests that his ownership of the items was safekeeping for the next generation as he would not have worn the female clothing himself if their appearance was gender specific.

[301] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961).

In these examples there is represented the transmission of possessions to the immediate children of a deceased family member. The movement of these objects is across one generation. Notably, there are other examples of the movement of possessions along other familial lines. Grandchildren are bequeathed to in the case of Ermintrude. The inheritance by siblings is also represented in the centurion's will – this differs from the other examples as it depicts the movement of possessions horizontally within a generation rather than bridging the gap between them. The placement of the heirloom Dea Nutrix in the child's grave from Roman Britain also reflects the 'natural' transmission of possessions from older to younger generations within a family. This is based upon the assumption that the figurine was deposited in the grave by the parents of the child, in their role as the organisers of the burial and the choice of grave goods. It has already been stated above that this act could be interpreted as intending to give comfort to both the parents and deceased child, however it could also be understood as representing the adherence of the traditional movement of heirlooms between family members in death. The act echoes the tradition of transmitting special objects from parents to offspring that has been frustrated by the early death of the child. Perhaps the inclusion of the Dea Nutrix in the burial represents the continuation of 'natural' social practices in the face of the 'unnatural' death of a child before that of its parents.

This movement between living and dead members of a family is inverted in the notable exception to this evidence - the document P.Princ.2.95 in which a father seeks to reclaim his dead daughter's possessions. This reversal of the usual transmission of family possessions is prompted by the apparently untimely death of the woman in question. The retrieval of these objects could also suggest that they were once given to the woman by her father, perhaps as dowry, and he is therefore claiming what is rightfully his. By doing so, their lives within the family continue and they have potential to be inherited by other relatives at a later date.

The majority of these sources are examples of textual evidence. Material sources in the form of archaeological evidence and physical remains are more difficult in providing details of who gave to whom; instead only the objects inherited are certain. It has already been noted that on the Hunting Plate of the Sevso Treasure, the role of the object as a gift (potentially from outside of the family)

and heirloom is clear from the inscription. Similarly, inscriptions on the objects belonging to the Esquiline Treasure suggest ownership over several generations by the same family, emphasising their roles as heirlooms. Beyond this, further detail is difficult to identify. Many of the objects of the Esquiline Treasure are associated with the social traditions of the toilet and feminine grooming and therefore may unfairly represent heirlooms transmitted between women of the same family. This could be argued for the silver ewer inscribed with the name Pelegrina that belongs to the Treasure.

IV.4. Material evocations of the past

The value of heirloom objects comes from their ability to preserve memories and link the past with present and future generations of a family. As such, they are referents to the past in material form. This is not just in terms of the memories they embody for their owners, but also through their physical appearance. Over time, manufacturing techniques, styles of object and decorative subject matter change as fashions and tastes alter. Furthermore, extended use may result in the physical deterioration of the objects.[302] These features are often the basis on which the identification of heirloom objects are made, and the owners of such objects would also have noted such material evidence of age. The recognition of antique objects during this period was discussed in the early part of this chapter, and is evidenced by the cultural rise of *paideia* as a fashion during Late Antiquity. However, an object's material embodiment of the past can also relate directly to the function of a possession as heirloom, and contribute to the nostalgia evoked by it, be they heirloom statues that depict a now defunct classical god or a style of cheap pottery that has now fallen out of fashion and is no longer made.

Inscriptions on heirloom objects are one way in which the object's link with the past is affirmed in a physical sense. The inclusion of names such as Sevso, or the monograms relating to the Turcii family on the objects of the Esquiline Treasure, link the object to specific individuals and their identities. Their lives as family members and roles as owners of the object are thus preserved and concretised for future generations. Furthermore, this commemoration and perpetuation of a person's memory is accessible to anyone viewing the object – no longer is the memory exclusively

[302] See also MacCracken (1988) for his discussion of 'patina' and meaning in objects.

owned by those who personally remember the object or the person with whom it is linked. Its importance as an heirloom is physically inscribed upon the surface of the object. Events can similarly be frozen in time, as the inscription on the Hunting Plate demonstrates; in this case the act of gift donation and the intention behind it has been materially preserved. A similar interpretation can be given to the coins included on various examples of heirloom jewellery. Issues of coins relate to a specific period in time, in terms of their design and the emperor depicted upon them. This is the reason they are so useful to archaeologists as a dating tool. When worn as jewellery, they become a referent to this particular era, powerfully evoking the past through their material form. Texts of significant age can also represent material evocations of the past. In terms of palaeography, a reader may notice changes in writing style, and the use of archaic spelling and grammar. The contents of texts, especially the documentary texts found within the papyrological record, can also preserve moments from the past. Dated contracts or sets of accounts, and descriptions of past events within letters or petitions memorialise historical occurrences. They function to preserve the details of earlier times and emphasise their age and a sense of nostalgia by highlighting change and differences with the present.

In this way, many heirloom objects function as relics from the past – surviving over periods of time and accumulating memories relating to their successive owners from which their status and value is derived. They refer to old modes of living, reminding the viewer of familiar times in the distant (or not so distant) past. They reinforce the memories with which they are attached and preserve the identities of past owners through their biographical link with the past. It is this association with previous generations that is emphasised by such noticeable physical age, and which simultaneously preserves their relevance for current and future generations within a family.

IV.5. Function versus meaning

It is clear that when displayed heirlooms had the ability to communicate meaning to onlookers. However, they could also have more practical purposes alongside this display function. For example, the Hunting Plate from the Sevso Treasure is highly decorative and communicates its heirloom status through the inscription. However, analysis reveals that it also bears patterns of

wear that show it was actively used for dining.[303] Its main purpose in the home was therefore not solely the embodiment of memories and familial values. In terms of its practical uses, the behaviour and context in which the Hunting Plate would be used also needs to be considered. Dining as a social event would have collected together people, likely family members, to enact group behaviours. Dining together, and using objects such as the Hunting Plate as part of the activity, would reinforce the sense of kinship and cohesion of the family group. As a visible act, the behaviour would also communicate to others to their status as a unified group, whereas participation in communal dining could be argued to incorporate individuals into the family unit. All of these meanings would be reinforced by the use of dining wares that have additional heirloom significance, and simultaneously reinforce and perpetuate the significance of these objects. Similar arguments can be made for articles associated with toilet rituals, such as the Projecta casket, in which their physical use would strengthen the relationship between owner and possession, and maintain the heirloom status of the object. To extrapolate this further, whilst there is little evidence for the reading and rereading of texts, there is the potential for such behaviours to similarly creation and maintain the significance of heirloom texts.

When thinking about the functions of heirloom objects, it becomes apparent that not all family members would have been able to use certain heirlooms objects. For example, the primary function of clothing and jewellery is to cover, protect and adorn the body – however for gender specific items, their appearance meant that only certain individuals could have used them. Similarly, specialised equipment such as weaponry is unlikely to have had a regular functional purpose for most members of a family. As such, it seems that simply the ownership of heirlooms becomes of dominant importance for those who cannot directly use the objects themselves, driven by an acknowledgement of the objects' significance as family heirlooms. This is likely to be especially true of objects that have a significant intrinsic worth, such as gold or silver possessions. Such curation would therefore ensure the transmission of these objects to future generations, regardless of contemporary use. This behaviour would thus represent a way of providing for future family members. This provision would be potentially in monetary terms should the objects have economic

[303] Bennett (1994) 27.

value. Furthermore, extended ownership would also ensure the safeguarding of family identity and memories, allowing the transmission of intangible values to future generations in material form.

CHAPTER 4: GIFTS

I. INTRODUCTION

As the discussion of heirlooms has demonstrated, a key feature of an object's biography is the circumstances of acquisition. As well as via family bequests, objects can be acquired as gifts given by another, a behaviour often enacted to mark important occasions in the life of the donor or recipient. It is through this biographical detail that the object can be associated with persons and events for the owner. The purpose of these gift exchanges is not predominantly economic; instead the movement of objects between people occurs for reasons of apparent affection, altruism, tradition, or social convention. As explored within the theoretical chapter of this thesis, the act of gift giving creates social ties between people, through the generation of obligations under which relationships can be constructed and maintained.[304] As such, because of their biographies, gifted objects can represent this relationship in material form, becoming the physical embodiment of the social link. Specifically, gift objects can represent their donor, becoming personified.[305] This is even truer should the object in question be made by the donors themselves.[306] All of these factors allow the creation of meaning and personal value. Therefore the identification of gifts also signals the recognition of potentially meaningful domestic objects.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the evidence for gift giving on a personal scale in Late Antiquity. Many studies of artefacts from this period focus on high status objects, often related to imperial or civic gift giving. These topics will be discussed in this chapter where necessary, however the focus will remain on the relationships between people and the gifts they receive, and how this relates to the relationship between the donor and recipient. This will be done through identifying the kinds of objects that were given as gifts and the impetus behind the donation.

I.1. Evidence

Evidence for the giving and receiving of gifts comes to us in a variety of forms. Documentary texts, such as private letters, can record the details of a gifted object such as appearance, function, price,

[304] Mauss (1966) 10-11; Gregory (1982) 41.
[305] Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45.
[306] Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.

weight, or origin. Contextual details are often also included, recording the donor, the recipient, and the occasion donated (if there was one). Such documents are invaluable for recording *ad hoc* donations of goods, which often accompanied the letter recording the details of the gift. Literary texts can also record gifts, but these are often in terms of specific occasions such as marriage, or exchanges relating to imperial diplomacy and largesse. The first-century writer Martial makes extensive references within his books of epigrams to gift giving as many of the short verses are intended to accompany fictional presents. Despite the texts' early date, many of the details he gives are useful in providing an idea of gift giving traditions that are absent in late antique evidence. From the archaeological record, the material culture of Late Antiquity often provides significant clues as to the biography of an object, allowing a tentative identification of such 'gifted' possessions. For example, imagery on domestic objects can help to identify the occasion of a donation or the person to whom a gift was given. Many of the objects discussed showcase another important feature - inscriptions - which locate their biographical details materially upon them. Such an act transforms the information contained in the inscription into one of the dominant features of its history and becomes a constant reminder of this when viewed. Inscriptions can also reference the donor, frequently seen in imperial gifts, which feature the image or name of the emperor from whom the object originates.

The structure of this chapter reflects the biographical information provided by the evidence. The first part collates and assesses evidence of gifts that are associated predominantly with specific events or occasions; the second section looks at gifted objects associated with individuals. There will inevitably be crossovers within the evidence, which will be addressed within the discussions section at the end of this chapter.

II. Gifts & Occasions

II.1. Wedding gifts

Documentary texts demonstrate that gifts were given on the occasion of marriage. Whilst some items were perishable or consumable and therefore distinguished by their impermanence, others

became everyday household possessions. One such example of a wedding gift is the following late fourth- to early fifth-century note that accompanied a present:

> For the lucky day of the marriage of my lord son, Limenios, there has been allotted to you one flagon (of wine), equals 1 flagon.[307]

This is a gift of wine given from a father to a son on his wedding day. Wine is an appropriate gift as feasting would have been an integral part of the marriage celebrations – in the sixth century, Dioscorus of Aphrodito emphasises the place of wine in wedding celebrations in his *epithalamium* poem, describing the drink as "love's adornment".[308]

However, the flagon which contained the wine would likely be as integral a part of the gift as the wine itself. The vessel is specifically described as a flagon (ὀμφακηρὰ), which contrasts with the more usual description of jars or amphorae of wine in other papyrological texts of the period. *Omphakera* refers to a rounded grape-shaped vessel after the unripe grape from which the name derives.[309] Whilst in terms of size or material we are unsure of details, it seems likely that it was much like a jug or pitcher, allowing the contents to be poured easily. There are examples from the period of such objects made in both glass and ceramic that have a recognisably globular 'grape' shape (fig. 19 and fig. 20).[310] It seems however that glass would have been especially suitable. Whilst pottery vessels would have provided the strength required for the bulk transport of commodities through trade, in contrast glassware most likely met needs in the local populace for vessels to hold smaller quantities of liquids.[311] It is also likely that such an object would be reused within the home, potentially becoming a permanent part of Limenios' domestic material culture. Fleming suggests that many glass vessels became storage containers in a cycle of filling, use and recycling, giving them a potential use life of many decades.[312] It is one such vessel that seems to be described in the sixth- to seventh-century letter SB 18.13762. The writer requests some fish sauce to be sent to her from her husband:

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[307] SB 14 12077, trans. Youtie (1976) 100.
[308] P.Cair.Masp.2.67179; trans. MacCoull (1988) 89.
[309] Youtie (1976) 100.
[310] Moulded glass vessels in the form of bunches of grapes are also known in large numbers from the Roman period. The reason they are not included in this discussion is their small size (the bodies are usually less than 10 cm in height), which seems unlikely for vessels used to contain wine. See Stern (1995) 190-95.
[311] Fleming (1999) 62.
[312] Fleming (1999) 62-3.

> […] Your lordship was requested – as I also asked in person – to send me a little mushroom and the small (jar of) oil and the garum in the omphalos bottle[…][313]

The *omphalos* description seems to refer to the type of decoration upon the vessel (protuberances like bellybuttons), a feature that makes the vessel identifiable and distinguishable from other containers within the couple's home. Such familiarity with a distinctive possession could well be an example of reuse. That there was an existing tradition of giving gifts at weddings is further underlined by the second-century letter P.Flor.3.332:

> At your wedding the wife of my brother Diskas brought me 100 drachmas. Since now her son Nilos is going to get married, it is right that we make a return gift, even if little disputes are between us.[314]

This text suggests that the giving of gifts was a social convention to which it was necessary to adhere, at least within families.

Looking beyond the documentary papyri, there is further evidence for other sorts of wedding gifts. The Projecta Casket, the famous fourth-century silver chest mentioned in the previous chapter, is one possible example (fig. 21). The casket features an inscription that reads *Secunde et Proiecta vivatis in Christo* or "Secundus and Projecta, may you live in Christ". In addition it has extensive decoration showing Venus at her toilet alongside an analogous representation of a woman, alluding to the Projecta named in the dedication; it also features a double portrait showing a man and woman depicted within an ornamental wreath. Shelton suggests the casket was a gift to the bride, with the imagery reflecting the ritual of the bride before her wedding.[315] The iconography – the double portrait of the man and woman, presumed to be the Projecta and Secundus of the inscription, the representation of Venus at her toilet, and the comparable image of Projecta at hers – is strongly associated with the concept of marriage and the contemporary ideals surrounding femininity. As Elsner describes, these scenes depict Projecta as constructing her own image in anticipation of the late antique male, the Secundus of the inscription and portrait.[316] The imagery on the toilet casket is self-referential and positions Projecta as the product of the object and its intended use – something reflected in the depiction of the process of beautification and the

[313] SB 18.13762; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 235-236.
[314] P.Flor.3.332; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 147.
[315] Shelton (1981) 28
[316] Elsner (2003) 30

comparison with Venus on the Casket's decoration.[317] The result of this process is the marital bliss depicted by the couple's portrait.[318] Of course, as Elsner argues, it is impossible to know whether the casket actually represents a gift given on the day of the wedding – however, a definite association between the iconography of the decoration and the union of Projecta and Secundus can be identified.[319] Therefore whilst it might not have been given on the day of their wedding, this object would have been associated with this event in the minds of the owners.

Other examples of late antique silverware can also be interpreted as wedding gifts. The Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate (again discussed in the previous chapter) is likely to be a gift. This is implied by the donative tone of the object's inscription: "May these little vessels, Sevso, last you for many ages, so that they may serve your descendants worthily."[320] It seems certain that the object was presented to commemorate a significant event; the lack of donor name suggests an event within the family of Sevso.[321] That this event is a wedding is argued by Cameron, who highlights the importance of the emphasis on Sevso's descendants – the natural product of a marriage – within the inscription.[322] Dunbabin also suggests that the presence of a female figure in the central picnic scene of the plate endorses the interpretation of the object as a wedding gift. The inclusion of these two central figures suggests they can be interpreted as Sevso and his wife enjoying their estate together; in reality a Roman woman would not be present on such a hunting expedition.[323]

In support of the giving of silver plate as wedding gifts is Ausonius' fourth-century *epithalamium* poem on the subject of the marriage ceremony. It includes a stanza detailing the gifts given to a bride and groom:

> The boys advance and, all together before their parents' eyes, bring their gifts, a robe stiff with embroidery of gold, carrying as offerings talents of gold and ivory, a chair, a veil adorned with acanthus leaves in saffron, a great piece of plate for the table, for the neck a string of pearls, and a diadem of both gems and gold. [324]

[317] Elsner (2003) 31.
[318] Elsner (2003) 31.
[319] Elsner (2007) 204.
[320] Dunbabin (2003b) 142.
[321] Dunbabin (2003b) 143.
[322] Al. Cameron (1992) 185.
[323] Dunbabin (2003b) 149.
[324] Aus. *Cent. Nupt.* 17.5; trans. Evelyn White (1919).

Ausonius also refers to jewellery in his poem, something which is a common feature in other sources relating to wedding gifts. For example, one of the late fifth- to early-sixth century homilies of Severus of Antioch describes the way in which women in his congregation gave gold jewellery to imperial brides visiting the city.[325] Late antique and Byzantine marriage jewellery has been widely studied and discussed by scholars.[326] It forms a discrete set of ornamentation that was explicitly linked with a significant biographical event – both in terms of the life of the object and the life of the owner. Such jewellery included marriage rings, which were worn by both men and women of the wealthy classes in the fourth and fifth centuries, as well as necklaces, bracelets and belts.[327] Textual sources reveal that the exchange of jewellery between the betrothed couple on the occasion of marriage was common. The Life of St Alexius includes a description of how he gave a belt and ring as a gift to his bride in the chamber after the ceremony.[328] Therefore it seems that gifts were not only given to the bride and groom on the occasion of their wedding, but also between the couple in a more private setting.[329] Several marriage belts have survived to us today; the example in fig. 22 is made of gold roundels, or medallions, joined to form a chain. The medallions at the front depict a wedding ceremony, which Christ is overseeing. Walker argues that the presentation of such marriage jewellery in a private context suggests that the objects did not have a role within the ceremony, but rather were exchanged to fulfil a practical amuletic function.[330] The gold wedding belt features an inscription referring to harmony and concord, as many other examples of marriage jewellery also do. By stating ΕΧ ΘΕΟΥ ΟΜΟΝΥΑ ΧΑΡΙ ΥΓΙΑ ("from God harmony grace health"), the belt protects the wearer and their marital union from attacks, which were often invoked within pagan love spells and charms.[331] Inscriptions and iconography like that used on the marriage belt above help to identify jewellery associated with marriage. Other designs include a pair of clasped hands, which echo the moment known as the *iunctio dextrarum* when the bride and groom's hands were traditionally joined in the wedding ceremony (fig. 23); alternatively, the

[325] Severus of Antioch, *Hom.* 100; trans. from the French in Leader-Newby (2004) 70.
[326] See especially Vikan (1990). Also Walker (2002), and Ross, *et al.* (2005).
[327] Vikan (1990) 146-7.
[328] *Life of Saint Alexius* 2.15; trans. Odenkirchen (1978).
[329] This echoes Emperor Honorius' pre-nuptial gift of heirloom jewellery to Maria, daughter of Stilicho, as described by Claudian (*Epithalamium* 10.10-15). See chapter 3, section III.2, for full discussion.
[330] Walker (2002) 66.
[331] Walker (2002) 66.

couple's heads are shown facing each other in profile as seen on imperial coinage (fig. 24).[332] By the sixth century, these motifs are almost exclusively replaced by paired frontal bust portraits – such as those on the Projecta Casket (fig. 21).[333]

Similar 'marriage' iconography can also be found on objects other than jewellery. Gold glass roundels, the majority of which originally formed the bases of vessels before their walls were removed, can also feature such decorative motifs, suggesting that they were used to commemorate the event of marriage.[334] One example is the fourth-century AD glass base in fig. 25, which depicts a pair of frontal bust portraits of a couple either side of a depiction of Hercules. It features an inscription within a border that reads ORFITVS.ET CONSTANTIA.IN NOMINE HERCVLIS, or "Orfitus and Constantia, live happily in the name of Hercules". There is also an additional inscription reading ACERENTINO FELICES BIBATIS, thought to translate as " Enjoy the wine of Acerentia". Harden interprets this object as a wedding gift to a pagan couple as the inscription exhorts the pair together by name to "live happily", and the depiction of Hercules shows him carrying apples, which were his wedding present to Jupiter and Juno.[335] Such iconography thus makes the object suitable for a wedding gift. However, the inscription on the object also suggests that the context of the gift giving was slightly more complex. It names the couple as Orfitus and Constantius. Cameron identifies Orfitus as Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, a mid fourth-century prefect of Rome, and his wife Constantius, who, as suggested by her name, was related to the imperial family.[336] The inscription also contains the reference *Acerentino*; Cameron argues that this is the Roman town of Acerentia (modern day Acerenza), which notably was home to a cult of Hercules, whose image is represented on the vessel base.[337] Both Cameron and Howells state the likelihood of the vessel, of which now only the base survives, being commissioned by the town of Acerentia and given as a gift to Orfitus, their patron.[338] Such an interpretation gives several layers of meaning to the object. For Orfitus and Constantius, the vessel would not only be associated with

[332] Vikan (1990) 148.
[333] Vikan (1990) 150.
[334] Al. Cameron (1996) 299.
[335] Harden (1988) 280.
[336] Al. Cameron (1996) 300-1.
[337] Al. Cameron (1996) 296-8.
[338] Howells (2010) 276; Al. Cameron (1996) 300. This object is discussed further in relation to souvenirs; see chapter 5, section II.1.

Acerentia, the inhabitants of which are the donors of the gift, but would also refer to the social status of Orfitus and his role as patron of the town. The iconography used on the object also corresponds not only to the town from which the object originates, but also the union of Orfitus and his wife Constantius, even if the gift was not given specifically to commemorate their wedding.

In Howells' doctoral thesis, a study examining the gold glass roundels of the British Museum, he details the use of such double portrait imagery on the vessel bases. He explains that the majority of the examples feature cut and incised gold leaf decoration, a technique that lends itself to the mass production of objects of generally unexceptional quality; such manufacture suggests that workshops could produce these generic vessels in large numbers for reasonable prices.[339] This means that gold glass vessels could be purchased as ready-made gifts or with customised inscriptions suitable for weddings, but could also be given to married couples at any point in their lives. Such objects can therefore be understood as generic gift objects, and not necessarily associated with or explicitly made for weddings, but produced to be suitable for a variety of contexts.[340] At the other end of the spectrum are the purpose made gold glass medallions that feature skilled and highly realistic portraits of individuals or small family groups (fig. 26). Unlike the vessel bases above, these medallions are stand-alone objects and were never originally part of a receptacle.[341] Howells notes that the depictions are of individuals rather than generic images; furthermore they never feature a complete family group – either an adult man is depicted alone, or an adult woman with one or more children is the subject of the portrait. As such, medallions depicting an individual male might have been possessed by women to evoke the presence of an absent father or son; similarly those depicting a women and children may have been carried around by a father whilst away from home.[342] It is thus feasible that these objects also formed gifts, given between family members on the occasion of parting and representing highly personal commissioned objects.

[339] Howells (2010) 276-277.
[340] Howells (2010) 277-278.
[341] Howells (2010) 274-75.
[342] Howells (2010) 275.

Cameron points out that the majority of the gold glass roundels have been found in the walls of the early Christian catacombs, as though marking or decorating the gravesites.[343] Their interment suggests that they had a long life within the household before the owner's death. In reference to the gold glass bases, an example of a late fourth- to early fifth-century gold vessel in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 27) still has some of the vessel walls extant. The curvature of these walls suggest that the original vessel was a broad shallow dish or bowl, perhaps something similar in form to the fourth-century example in fig. 28, also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is a conclusion supported by Howells' analysis.[344]

II.2. Other events

To modern eyes, birthdays seem an obvious occasion on which gifts should be given. There was certainly a tradition of celebrating birthdays within the Roman period – the day was known as the *dies natalis* and was celebrated by birthday feasts and gift giving.[345] Gifts listed within literary texts represent a range of objects – Martial quotes Spanish frosted silver, good quality clothing, jewellery, antique works of art, and livestock as birthday presents.[346] The celebration of birthdays continued into the late antique period. In the fifth century, Sidonius Apollinaris refers to a feast celebrating a sixteenth birthday in his family.[347] In papyrological sources, Theophanes is also recorded within his archival records as marking his daughter's birthday; what he spent his money on is not detailed in P.Ryl. 627, however Matthews suggests it was a dedication in a temple.[348] The Digest of Justinian also makes reference to the giving of gifts from husband to wife on the occasion of her birthday.[349] Vikan suggests that on such occasions rings were given between married couples; certainly the objects discussed above featuring marriage iconography and inscriptions relating to harmony and happy unions would be suitable for birthday exchanges between couples.[350] Beyond this however, it is difficult to identify birthday gifts from existing artefacts – it

[343] Al. Cameron (1996) 299.
[344] Howells (2010) 76-77.
[345] Tab.Vindol.2.291 is a late first-early second century invitation to the birthday party of Claudia Severa; Bowman (2003) 135. See also Martial, *Epigrams.* 7.86 and 10.87 for the giving of birthday gifts; trans. Shackleton Bailey (1993).
[346] Martial, *Epigrams* 7.86, 10.87; trans. Shackleton Bailey (1993).
[347] Sidonius Apollinaris. *Poems.* 17; trans. Anderson (1963).
[348] Matthews (2006) 51.
[349] *Dig. Jus.* 24.1.31.8; trans. Watson (1985).
[350] Vikan (1990) 147, n.11.

is likely that the majority of such gifted objects had no obvious explicit connection with such an anniversary, as suggested by the items listed by Martial.

Festivals formed another type of event at which gifts were traditionally exchanged. Many of Martial's references in books 13 and 14 to gift giving relate to the winter festival of Saturnalia.[351] In the late antique period, the New Year's festival of Kalends appears frequently within the sources as an occasion at which gifts are exchanged. The fourth-century scholar Libanius describes the activity in his *Progymnasmata*; at the New Year Kalends, gifts are distributed throughout the city with the exchange of gold coins especially prominent in his description.[352] This is echoed in the late fourth- to early fifth-century Asterius of Amasea's work; Asterius makes clear that he disapproves of the traditional giving of gold coins, and the door-to-door distribution by children of fruit decorated with silver.[353] This accords with Martial's first-century description of the offering of gilded dates as a gift on the Kalends of January.[354] Other than gilt fruits and money however, it is unclear whether other objects more domestic in nature were also exchanged. Presumably, individuals of means would give gifts similar to those seen at weddings and birthdays to those dear to them – namely, silver plate, jewellery items, clothing and domestic furnishings. Certainly jewellery and clothing would be suitable for the Kalends' festivities; Libanius describes how the event prompted people to wash their clothes or borrow some to wear, whilst other celebrants were "resplendent with clothing that is mostly purple".[355] A fourth- to fifth-century letter similarly records the emphasis on personal appearance: the female writer requests some leg ornaments for her to wear for the upcoming Kalends festival.[356]

Gift giving was also a feature of the nascent festival of Easter within the Christian community. Gregory of Nyssa wrote a short text for Eusebius, Bishop of Chalcis, on the nature of Easter as a gift for him on the occasion of the festival.[357] He also wrote *On The Making of Man* as an Easter

[351] Martial, *Epigrams*, bks 13-14; trans. Shackleton Bailey (1993).
[352] Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 13.5-10; trans. Gibson (2008).
[353] Asterius, *Hom.* 4; trans. Anderson & Goodspeed (1904).
[354] Martial, *Epigrams* 13.27; trans. Shackleton Bailey (1993).
[355] Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 5.2, 5.7; trans. Gibson (2008).
[356] The leg ornaments are named as περισκελίδια; SB 20.14226.
[357] Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 4; trans. Silvas (2007).

gift to his brother.[358] The fourth-century Bishop of Constantinople, Gregory of Nazianzus, also sent a text as an Easter gift to Theodore of Tyana; the letter states, "And we in return give you the greatest thing we have, our prayers, But that you may have some small thing to remember us by, we send you the volume of the Philocalia of Origen".[359] Whether such gifts would have been typical of the general Christian populace is more difficult to say. Gifts of religious texts or books make comment on the donors' positions as leading ecclesiastical figures, as well as the education of sender and recipient. Saint Jerome in a letter of the late fourth century records sending "a manuscript containing Isaiah's ten most obscure visions which I have lately elucidated with a critical commentary" as a gift along with haircloths to the Spanish ascetic Lucinius.[360] Books can certainly be found as gifts elsewhere in Late Antiquity. The famous Vienna Dioscorides codex, a medical compendium, was a gift in the early sixth century to the imperial princess Anicia Juliana. It was given by the people of Honoratae, located on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, in thanks for her building of a church in their town.[361]

III. GIFTS & PEOPLE

III.1. Imperial gifts

When considering gifts associated with people, the most substantial category of evidence is imperial gift giving. It has already been mentioned how imperial gifts were used as tools within diplomatic encounters with foreign forces. In fact the evidence suggests that the main role of imperial gifts was as political and military lubricants, serving to sweeten negotiations surrounding alliances, treaties, and commercial enterprises.[362]

Literary sources are rich in references to gift giving between the emperor and the heads of foreign powers. Constantine the Great is recorded by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, as receiving gifts from diplomatic visitors to demonstrate their service and alliance to the emperor. These items included gold crowns, jewelled diadems, gold cloth, horses, and weaponry, and Constantine reciprocated

[358] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*; trans. Wilson (1893).
[359] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 115; trans. Browne & Swallow (1894).
[360] Jerome, *Ep.* 71.7; trans. Fremantle (1893).
[361] Kiilerich (2001) 171.
[362] Cutler (2008) 88.

with material gifts of equal status, as well as official titles.[363] Similarly, in the sixth century John Malalas describes how Justinian won over Boa, the Queen of the Sabir Huns, with gifts of silver vessels and money in order that she capture two Hunnish kings in league with the Persians.[364]

Literary sources also emphasise the importance of gift giving by the emperor to his military. Imperial gifts were a way to reward exceptional members of the empire's army. In the sixth century, the historian Agathias describes Rusticus, Justinian's pursebearer, as making reward payments on behalf of the emperor to soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle.[365] Another figure, identified as John, is described similarly, being responsible for keeping the emperor informed with current events and distributing the imperial largesse to those soldiers who distinguished themselves in the field.[366] The giving of precious gifts was also a method to pay the soldiers' wages. As Duncan-Jones explains, in the early fourth century the salary of a soldier had not increased since AD 235.[367] To make up this shortfall, part of the army's wages were paid in kind, through imperial 'gifts' of coinage and objects of precious metal; these gifts were given on specific honorific occasions, and helped to round up the soldiers' income to the correct level.[368] The large gold medallion of Constantine from AD 310 in the Beaurains hoard is identified as belonging to a soldier (fig. 29). It bears on its surface a graffito reading VITALIANI PROTICTORIS, meaning "Belonging to Vitalian, protector", *protector* being a military rank.[369] Another medallion from the same hoard, known as the Beaurains (or 'Arras') Medallion is a 'money medallion' – that is, it forms a multiple value of the standard gold coin of the day, and was gifted in commemoration of significant imperial events to senior army officers.[370] Other imperial gifts are also significant for their monetary or bullion value. The well-studied *missoria*, or imperial commemorative plates, are thought to have been imperial gifts. The Missorium of Theodosius, dating to the late-fourth century, represents the largest and heaviest example known today.[371] This plate depicts the Emperor Theodosius flanked by his two co-emperors Valentinian II and Arcadius

[363] Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 4.7.1-3; trans. Cameron & Hall (1999).
[364] Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.13; trans. Jeffreys, *et al.* (1986).
[365] Agathias 3.2.4-5 ; trans. Frendo (1975).
[366] Agathias 4.17.2-3; trans. Frendo (1975).
[367] Duncan-Jones (1978) 549-50.
[368] Abdy (2006) 55.
[369] Abdy (2006) 54.
[370] Abdy (2006) 55.
[371] Leader-Newby (2004) 11.

(fig. 30); the reverse features an inscription reading ΠΟC ΛI MET, recording the plate's weight as 50 Roman pounds.[372] This underlines the object's importance not only as a meaningful commemorative object but also as representing a significant amount of money in bullion form. When found it was folded in two and bore signs of attempts to cut the plate up – presumably for scrap, suggesting that by this point the intrinsic value of the metal was more important than any associations it once had with the imperial donor.[373] Such gift giving was usually done on important imperial occasions. The Munich Treasure, a hoard of silverware buried around AD 324 in the eastern Roman Empire, includes a number of silver vessels featuring commemorative imperial inscriptions.[374] Fig. 31 shows a bowl that was given as a gift on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Emperors Crispus and Constantine II; the inscription reads "VOTIS X CAESS NN (*Votis decennalibus* [*duorum*] *Caesarum nostrorum*) / On the celebration of the tenth anniversary of our two junior emperors".[375] As well as anniversaries, book IV of Corippus' sixth-century panegyric *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* records the giving of gold and silver gifts on Justin II's accession to the imperial consulship.[376]

It is clear that the impetus behind the donation of imperial gifts was related to pragmatic considerations on the behalf of the emperor. As such, concepts such as sentimental value seem irrelevant in the face of the evidence above. However, the way in which these gifts were received and valued by the owners needs to be considered; is there any room here for more personal scales of meaning? Considering the biographies of these imperial gifts, there certainly seems room for the investment of personal meaning. For members of the military, as well as providing a salary in economic terms, the receiving of gifts also reflects their own personal biography. The objects commemorate not only imperial events but also relate to the lives and careers of the recipients.

The graffito on the Beaurains hoard medallion can be interpreted as evidence of this. Such an inscription is, of course, a practical measure– ensuring the ownership of this valuable is clear to

[372] Leader-Newby (2004) 14.
[373] 'Hacksilver' is discussed in the previous chapter regarding heirlooms and the Traprain Law hoard. See also the volume by Hunter and Painter (2013) which discusses Traprain Law and the phenomenon of hacksilver more broadly.
[374] Kent & Painter (1977) 20.
[375] Kent & Painter (1977) 22.
[376] Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* 4; trans. Av. Cameron (1976).

anyone encountering it and making it identifiable. However, this informal legend makes Vitalian, the owner, a part of the object's own history and associates the individual with the Emperor Constantine. As such, it emphasises not only the role of Constantine in the life of Vitalian, but also the role of Vitalian as *protector* in the life of Constantine. Similar inscriptions are found on objects belonging to the Kaiseraugst hoard. Graffiti in the form of names (presumably owners of the objects) is present on several pieces of silverware. Guggisberg argues that the presence of a graffito name on an object demonstrates that the object no longer belongs to that person, as the present owner would not need to write who it belonged to – they would of course know that they are the owner.[377] However, this seems an erroneous interpretation, especially in light of the Beaurains inscription. Surely if an object was acquired with another person's name on it, it would be logical to inscribe the new owner's name to avoid confusion and distinguish ownership. What is interesting is that several of the Kaiseraugst objects have multiple owner inscriptions. Platters 74 and 75 (fig. 32) in the catalogue both bear the names of three different owners, suggesting that the accumulated biographies of these objects were a desirable feature.[378] The inclusion of the multiple owner names is extending the commemorative function of the objects, demonstrating in a material sense the history of the object and those associated with both its ownership and the imperial donor. The meanings and value of these objects are therefore multiple in nature. As well as their intrinsic, economic value they also speak of prestige, status and imperial favour. These are attractive attributes for an owner and reflect on his own social status. There is also the potential for personal value from the way the biography of the object intersects with that of the owner, especially in terms of military career.

It should also be noted that not all imperial gifts were high status objects of gold and silver – similarly decorated plates and vessels were also manufactured in glass and likewise distributed.[379] Imperial gifts also included smaller, personal items. Fig. 33 is a ring set with a coin of Diocletian alongside the inscription VIRTVS MILITUM, or "military courage", thought to have been given to a member of the Roman army as a gift.[380] Here the biography of the object is conveyed materially

[377] Guggisberg (2003) 301.
[378] Guggisberg (2003) 301.
[379] See Oliver (1975) 70 for the fragments of a glass plate decorated with imperial donative iconography.
[380] Kent & Painter (1977) 26-7.

through the coin itself, which features a prominent imperial portrait – essentially an image of the donor. To wear such an object on the body is to also wear a visible symbol of the relationship between the owner and the emperor that the ring embodies.

The emperor was not the only governmental figure who distributed gifts. Consuls also gave gifts, the best-known being in the form of ivory diptychs. Diptychs appear from around AD 400 onwards and represent gifts usually distributed on the accession to office of successive consuls.[381] They are formed of two hinged leaves of decoratively carved ivory, and usually depict the consul from whom the diptych originates –for example, as on the early sixth-century diptych of consul Clementinus in fig. 34. A late-fourth century letter by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus was written to accompany ivory diptychs as well as some small silver bowls, which were sent as gifts to close friends and people of merit.[382] The silver bowls described in Symmachus' letter are of a significantly lighter weight than the other examples of imperial largesse discussed above – a mere two pounds. This is notable, and Leader-Newby suggests that it reflects the desire to distribute many gifts to large numbers of people, rather than a small number of higher quality objects.[383] As such it seems that the importance of these gifts is linked to the relationships that are created by the exchange, rather than the bullion value of the objects.

Echoes of such behaviour can be seen in the actions of more ordinary people who also used gifts to gain support or persuade others to act in their favour. The late fifth- to early-sixth century letter P.Oxy.16.1872 requests fair taxation on a shipment of wine, and was accompanied by unidentified gifts:

> For I have written in reliance on your virtue and the friendship between us. For the holy God knows I have not written to protect another person, but the wine is being brought for myself. The most mean gifts which I have sent deign to accept as though they were much.[384]

In this case the gifts sent by the writer are similar to those given by consuls or even emperors in terms of intention; they function to create or strengthen relationships so that the recipient will act

[381] Weitzmann (1979) 5. Consular diptychs are further discussed as souvenirs; see chapter 5, section II.3 of this thesis.
[382] Symmachus, *Ep. 7.76*; trans. Callu (1995).
[383] Leader-Newby (2004) 42.
[384] P.Oxy.16.1872; trans. Hunt & Edgar (1932).

on the donor's behalf. As such these gifts, whatever they are, are tools of persuasion and help to oil the wheels of social action.

III.2. Handmade Gifts

Often, the manufacturer and donor of a gift can be one and the same. In such circumstances, the object is associated with the donor as it is an index of their labour and agency.[385] Evidence shows that many domestic possessions were made in the home. It is worth exploring whether the unique origin of these objects in terms of their production has any effect on the subsequent meaning of the objects for the owner.

It seems that a number of household possessions would have been made explicitly for another family member – something particularly true of clothing and textiles. The third- to fourth-century letter P.Oxy.31.2599 gives instruction for the production of *dikarytida* and a face cloth, amongst other orders for the purchase and distribution of a variety of domestic objects amongst the friends and family of the writer:[386]

> So then, tell the sister of the wife of Dioskoros to say to Didyme, "As you said, if you are working on dikarytida, make them; if you're not doing it, on my father's purple (yarn) and tow." I greet Esther and your sister Susanna. As you said, lady, "I'm sending you some towels, " send (them), and I'm sending you the Egyptian ones. […] To my lord brother Theodoros, Tauris (sends) many greetings. Buy three towels for me, my lord brother, and the boots which you mentioned and three pairs of slippers for the baths. Take the half-pound of fine tow (?) which I gave you to use and make it into a facecloth, or bring the price of it.[387]

It seems that the facecloth at least is to be made for use within the family, listed as it is alongside three towels for use by the writer. It is to be made from 'tow', the low quality fluffy fibres that come from processed flax stalks, creating a coarse linen when spun and woven into cloth.[388] Tow is attested in a number of other letters of the period; this one from the fourth-century has the writer request some so that she may spin it into products she can sell to financially support her brother's orphaned children:

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[385] Gell (1998) 23-4.
[386] The meaning of *dikarytida* is unknown: Rowlandson (1998) 270.
[387] P.Oxy. 31.2599; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006).
[388] Cleland, *et al* (2007) 72.

> To lady my mother Faustina, Allous, greetings in the Lord. […] [For the . . .] of my brother's orphaned children I, being a woman, cannot suffice. Therefore, if you have enough, send me via the letter-carrier two pounds of tow, so that I can spin and sell it for them. I greet you fondly. The little children greet you. I greet mother Kyriake. I pray for your good health.[389]

These two examples show that raw materials were purchased to make items within the home that could be both used within the family or sold on for a profit. Other examples demonstrate that more substantial belongings originated at the hands of family members. In the late fourth-century letter from Taesis to her husband Tiron, there is again the mention of the production of an item directly for her husband's use:

> To my lord husband Tiron, Taesis, many greetings […] And look, my lord, do not be neglectful because of what I wrote you: six mnas of purple (yarn) and a hanging lamp and a lamp stand and a good hand basin and two pounds of good incense and two cups, one small and one big. And look, I am weaving your cloak. […][390]

Here we see a wife acknowledge that she is weaving a cloak herself for her husband to wear. This is not an unusual occurrence and similar references to women being engaged in the making of clothing for other family members are found in the papyrological record. The third- to fourth-century letter SB 16 12694 sees the writer request a cloak to be made for him by his mother. Another letter, from the fourth to fifth century, similarly sees a request for clothing to be made, but this time it is a female writer who wishes another to make her a *himation*.[391] In the slightly earlier third-century AD letter, P.Oxy.7.1069, the writer requests his wife (or sister; it is unclear) to finish the making of his tunic.[392] In those documents where it is a close family member making the object, such as the cloaks in SB 16.12694 and P.Oxy.56.3860, and the tunic in P.Oxy. 7.1069, there is the potential for additional value. As discussed previously, the maker of an object can invest a part of himself or herself within the finished item, creating an association between the object and the maker in the mind of the owner.[393]

These homemade objects are actively requested within the texts; the one letter where the maker states she is making a cloak for her husband sees the reference phrased in a way that suggests that

[389] SB 14 11881 ; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006).
[390] P.Oxy. 56.3860 ; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006).
[391] SB 20.14226. The *himation* was a woman's dress: Bagnall (1993) 33.
[392] However this example mentions wages for the construction, therefore it could be that the wife/sister is simply overseeing the making and not participating herself.
[393] Belk (1988) 144; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.

he initiated the production process (P.Oxy. 56.3860). All of this suggests that for whatever reason homemade clothing was desirable, likely stemming from cultural and economic factors. To have clothing made by a member of the family could represent a saving in money. According to Bagnall, cloth and clothing purchased from a commercial manufacturer was expensive, to the point where owning fine quality clothing was seen as a way to preserve money in material form.[394] As Croom explains, clothing was an expensive commodity because of the amount of work required to create garments, and as such it was considered valuable.[395] This is supported by the quote describing Messalla's valuable heirloom clothing, discussed in the previous chapter. Requesting a family member to make your clothing could therefore be economically sound; this is suggested itself in the letter SB 16.12694, where the request for a cloak to be made by the writer's mother appears after a discussion of financial difficulty.

It is also noteworthy that the producers of cloth within the texts quoted above are all women. It has been much discussed in scholarship that spinning wool was thought to be the ideal feminine activity for women during Late Antiquity; John Chrysostom states that objects associated with spinning and weaving wool would be a sure sign of a woman's occupation of a house.[396] Therefore the production and display of such homemade textiles would embody messages of feminine domestic virtue. These positive connotations might also apply to the wearer. It is however unclear whether homemade garments would be distinguishable from professionally made clothing; Faith Morgan discusses how the reuse, modification and repair of clothing was a common practice within Late Antiquity and likely done both in the home and professionally.[397] As such its visibility would depend on the skill of the person doing the work. If noticeable, such garments might evoke thriftiness in the mind of the onlooker, however it is unlikely to have been seen in mainstream society as a virtuous or positive social message as it may have connotations of poverty and hardship.

[394] Bagnall (1993) 33 n.124.
[395] Croom (2010) 28.
[396] John Chrysostom, *Instruction and Refutation Directed against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins*; trans. Cox Miller (2005) 134.
[397] See chapter 5 of Morgan (2015).

In terms of sentimental value, it is unlikely that this was a dominant factor in the decision to make clothing for another. However, it *is* likely that such production created this kind of value. The role of clothing as meaningful objects can be demonstrated by looking at the process involved in making garments. The activity of spinning fibres into thread was a common practice during Late Antiquity. Wild states that this activity absorbed a disproportionate amount of labour.[398] According to Marx, value stems in part from the time and labour expended in the production of an object.[399] As a result, gifted handmade items that involve a lot of energy or resources in their creation, such as weaving cloth or making clothing, are likely to be considered more valuable by their recipient and therefore prized as a thoughtful and precious item representative of the maker.

At this point it is interesting to include a slightly earlier example from the papyri in relation to homemade objects. Most of the references to homemade objects within the texts are impassive requests or statements of intent, however O.Florida 14, a second-century text from Maximos concerning the recipient's pregnancy, includes the request: "Send me leaves as for a small basket and I will make it for you".[400] There is some confusion concerning the identity of the author due to the ambiguous original Greek; Maximos is a man's name but some of the grammar is feminine.[401] However, combined with the writer's declared intention to deliver the recipient's baby, the offer to make a basket as a gift seems like a gesture of kindness, contrasting with the requests seen in the other letters above relating to the making of clothing. Furthermore Bagnall suggests that the basket could be a crib.[402] As such, this suggests that the making of things had an emotional impetus besides the creation of objects of necessity.

IV. Texts, Gifts, and Surrogate Presence

Textual gifts given by leading members of the church were discussed above in association with gift giving at Easter. A link can be discerned between such texts and the topic of handmade gifts; several of the texts – such as *On the Making of Man* – were actually written by the donor, as well as given as gifts. The archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito contains poems he wrote in celebration of

[398] Wild (1976) 169.
[399] Marx (2000) 499.
[400] O.Florida 14.
[401] Bagnall (1976) 51; see also Thomas (1978) 142-44.
[402] Bagnall (1976) 54.

the birthdays of a variety of individuals.[403] Whilst these may not have been physically given as gifts to the subjects of the texts, they can still represent the creation of texts for another. If such texts are indeed interpreted as gifts, they can also be seen as handmade with all the associated layers of meaning that accompany such a status. The examples, however, represent very specific types of literary texts and as such likely correspond to a small and highly educated section of society. Yet more ordinary texts were extensively written and exchanged in the form of private letters between individuals throughout this period. Can these kinds of documents also be interpreted as gifts?

Andrew Gillett discusses how official letters could be considered as gift items through the story of Theophilus, and the delivering of a letter to the emperor in Rome via his envoy Isidore in AD 388.[404] In the story, the envoy is communicating in three forms: via Theophilus' written letters, via his own physical presence, and through the other material gifts that he delivers. Gillett explains that this provides a mixture of written, oral, performative, and semiotic modes of expression that were interdependent in the late antique period.[405] Whilst parts of Isidore's communication were ephemeral, others – namely the letter and gifts – were firmly material. As Gillett discusses, the materiality of the letter was essential as it provided authenticity to the message, and made it akin to a gift, thus assimilating it with the other tokens being presented to the emperor.[406] This specific story tells of a letter to an emperor and therefore represents official rather than informal communication. However, like in the story of Isidore and Theophilus, the letters of Late Antiquity often accompanied material gifts – food, clothing, or other objects. Furthermore, it was the material nature of letters that allowed them to be considered as a type of gift that could be kept and reread.[407]

Letters are also objects that have an affinity with handmade gifts. They are by their material nature written by hand, usually (although not always) by the person sending the communication.

[403] For example, *P.Cair.Masp.*I.67120 v.E, directed to an unknown recipient.

[404] This story is told in the works of both Socrates and Sozomen. Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2; trans. Périchon & Maraval (2006). Sozomen., *Hist. Eccl.* 8.2; trans. Festugière & Grillet (2008).
[405] Gillett (2012) 817-8.
[406] Gillett (2012) 818.
[407] Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 12.

Depending on the proficiency of the writer, they can take a lot of energy and time to create. Scribes were available for illiterate letter senders, however the majority of people able to read and write would have written letters themselves.[408] A number of letters reveal through their handwriting the effort expended in writing a message, with the script often worsening towards the end of the text as the person tires.[409] A late fourth-century letter from a wife to her husband makes a point of describing the effort required for writing: "Your guest Alexandros greets you, with his wife and children, and I Alexandros wore myself out writing you the letters. […]"[410] Whilst the effort required in writing would naturally depend on the skill and practice of the writer, this specific example nonetheless gives an idea of the energy and time put into creating letters, especially ones of length, as discussed above. This effort resonates with the idea that letters can provide what Belk describes as an 'extended self', providing a material extension of a person's identity; he notes that this is more likely to occur if time, labour, or money have been invested into the object in question.[411] This is the case for the following extract from a Coptic letter dating from the fourth century:

> […]… I am amazed how you (pl.) do not write concerning (any) letter you receive; even though a book was sent to you through Pishai, and another one sent through Pamour, with even…good eye-ointment (?). You (fem. Sg.) did not write that…, whatever he(?)…it. Indeed, write it well; do not make the letter short! […][412]

Here is a complaint over a lack of letters and the request for a reply – specifically one of length, which represents a significant outlay of effort. Therefore this letter as a material object can represent the writer of the message in physical form when otherwise impossible.

It seems that objects, including letters themselves, were used to provide a surrogate presence in times of physical absence. In such a scenario, objects are used as a tool to maintain personal relationships by embodying the sender in their materiality. It was a means of providing a material extension of a person's identity.[413] This effectively bridged the divide between the two absent

[408] See P.Köln 2.111 (fifth-sixth century AD) for an example of a scribe written letter.
[409] See, for example, SB 16.12981 (second to third century AD) where the letters increase in size as the writer continues. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 303.
[410] P.Oxy. 56.3860; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 378.
[411] Belk (1988) 144. See also Gamble (1998) 443, who discusses the 'release from proximity' in similar terms.
[412] P.Kell.Copt. 26 ; trans. Gardner, *et al*. (1999) 196.
[413] Belk (1988) 144.

parties and allowed their personal relationship to continue to function. Traditionally, letters were considered to provide company to the recipient. Cicero, in his letter of 22 BC to Atticus states, "Though I have nothing to say to you, I write all the same, because I feel as though I were talking to you."[414] Similarly, Seneca in the first century describes how letters provide physical traces of their writer and notes that, "I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith."[415] The New Testament's Pauline Epistles behave in a similar way; in the first century Paul sent letters to distant communities of Christians such the Romans and Corinthians in order to provide instructions and minister to the churches there as a replacement for his physical presence. The majority of letters mention Paul's intention to visit himself in person sometime in the foreseeable future, further emphasising the link between the letter's presence and Paul himself.[416]

Such evidence is also present in the late antique period. Jerome, in the fourth century describes the ability of letters to make the absent writer present in physical form: "I pray that distance may not sever those united in affection and that I may find my Lucinius present in absence through an interchange of letters."[417] These kinds of references are also found within the letters of ordinary people from the papyrological record. The fifth- to sixth-century letter P.Col.10.290 includes a discussion about the receipt of a variety of practical-sounding objects, but then complains that, "Since you left here, I am alone for a year, we have received nothing."[418] The link between the absence of objects and the absence of company seems clear. To not receive objects or gifts is to be alone and signifies an absence of people as well as possessions.

P.Oxy.6.963 (fig. 35) from the second to third centuries AD, provides an excellent example of how letters could function and were used by the sender: "Ophelia to Theanous her mother, greetings. I greet you, mother, wishing to catch sight of you already through this letter […]".[419] In this text we see that Ophelia, separated from her mother, is using the letter as a means to 'see' her – something that in practical terms is only possible if the two are in physical proximity. As this is not possible,

[414] Cicero, *Att.* 12.53; trans. Winstedt (1961).
[415] Seneca, *Ep.* 40.1; trans. Gummere (1925).
[416] See, for example, 1 Corinthians 16:5-7.
[417] Jerome, *Ep.* 71.7; trans. Fremantle (1893).
[418] P.Col.10.290.
[419] P.Oxy.6.963; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 333. The original Greek is ἀσπάζομαί σε, μῆτερ, διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων τούτων ἐπιθυμοῦσα ἤδη θεάσασθαι.

she is using the letter to bridge the physical distance dividing them and restore the tangible nature of their relationship. The significance of letters as surrogate objects is also seen in the late fourth-century letter P.Oxy. 56.3860:

> […] And send us a jar of honey, and hurry to come to us quickly. And if you cannot come to us quickly, at least write to us when you are coming, so that we may be in good spirits. […][420]

The connection between objects, letters, and physical presence exists in the fourth-century Coptic letter P.Benaki 4, written by a woman to a man (possibly her son) who is living in a monastic community. She states how she has returned quickly for his sake, then lists the foodstuffs she has sent him, along with detailed instructions of how to correctly prepare the items. Whilst the letter does not make it clear that the two are related, with "holy son" perhaps referring to his status in the church rather than a familial bond, it seems clear from the way in which the letter is written that there are strong overtones of maternal care.[421] The two are clearly separated by some distance, therefore objects could be construed as a means to provide comfort and allow her to be with him through the objects that she sends. This provision of a surrogate self through goods can be seen in earlier letters from the second century, suggesting that material gifts were traditionally an important social tool. In SB 22.15453 Sarapios writes to Ammonios stating that, "I shall send you a jar of fish sauce with the first donkeys. For I care as much about you as if you were my own father."[422] Also, P.Mich.8.465, from AD 108, in which Apollinarious describes his homesickness and how he misses his mother, followed by stating his intention to send her "a gift of Tyrian wares".[423]

It underlines again the way in which gifts, here in the form of letters, were tools to provide a surrogate presence or extended self. That material culture would be used in this way is not unique within the late antique period; archaeological evidence provides analogous examples of other kinds of objects providing a physical presence in lieu of the person the object personifies. For example the individualised gold glass portrait medallions discussed by Howells feature partial family groups

[420] P.Oxy. 56.3860; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 378.
[421] P.Benaki 4.
[422] SB 22.15453; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 165.
[423] P.Mich.8.465.

or individuals in order evoke their presence to the absent member in possession of the object.[424] Furthermore, as briefly discussed in the theory section of this thesis, imperial images were also thought to be imbued with the presence of the emperor and their power, and in the Christian period the images of Christ, members of the Holy Family, and saints on icons (and other objects) provided the venerator with their actual presence through the material form. As such, the conception of objects as people was already present within late antique society. Therefore it is unsurprising that other objects could be imbued with the presence of an individual on a more personal level.

Some of these objects, such as the medallions above, are however high quality and expensive objects and thus unavailable to a large section of society. It should be considered that other more mundane examples of material culture provided a similar surrogate presence. Certainly gifts, especially handmade, have been proven to embody their donor. The key biographical feature of these objects is their association with the giver, whose memory is embodied in the object's physical form. As such, gifts can represent people. Jerome states as much in his letter to a friend, which accompanied some small gifts: "When you look upon these trifles call to mind the friend in whom you delight and hasten the voyage which you have for a time deferred."[425]

V. Discussion

V.1. Contexts of gift giving

The evidence demonstrates that certain occasions and events represent moments in time at which gifts were given during the late antique period. On an individual scale, we see gifts being received on birthdays, weddings and, in terms of certain imperial donatives, in response to personal military achievements. Such occasions correspond exclusively to the lives of the recipient. Other occasions featuring the exchange of gifts, such as religious festivals, can be considered as more universal activities in which anyone who adhered to the celebrations also participated in gifting behaviour. When looking at these events, gift giving can be identified as a form of material celebration or acknowledgement of the day's importance. The giving of gifts as such helps to distinguish the event from normal daily life. This is true for both personal and general celebrations. The

[424] Howells (2010) 275.
[425] Jerome, *Ep.* 71.7; trans. Fremantle (1893).

materiality of gifted objects, excluding consumables such as food and drink, contrasts with the fleeting experience of an event that passes with time.[426] Gifts given as part of the celebrations of an occasion defy the passing of time by commemorating the event through their biography, and via the association between the object and context of giving in the recipient's memory.[427] Gift giving also functions to set the person who receives the gift apart from other individuals. This is most clearly seen in the case of imperial gifts to soldiers who distinguished themselves on the battlefield. Their distinctiveness from their colleagues is both rewarded and reinforced by the act of gift giving. The implicit comparison is made between the recipient and all those who did not receive a gift, and by extension the reasons behind it.

This provides an interesting juxtaposition with the gift giving activity at the festival of Kalends, where the sources show gifts exchanged between large numbers of people. Conversely, in these circumstances to not receive or give a gift would be the distinctive feature. The association between gifts and such events demonstrates that the impetus behind this behaviour was often linked with the adherence to social conventions. Part of the traditions associated with the celebrations of weddings, birthdays or festivals was that gifts of various forms were exchanged. Therefore, the primary reasoning for such acts is that it is 'the right thing to do' rather than representing a spontaneous gesture of affection or generosity. So for the exchange of multiple gifts at Kalends, to not participate would be breaking with the prevailing social convention, and distinguishing oneself through the absence of gifting behaviour. This would likely have been seen as a broadly negative thing as lack of participation would demonstrate a lack of conformity and departure from dominant social behaviours.

When considering the context of gift giving, there are also examples of 'ad hoc' donations, which are not associated with any apparent occasion; this is especially in relation to the evidence for homemade presents in the papyrological record. For example, in P.Oxy. 56.3860, a wife is recorded as telling her husband that she is weaving him a cloak. The problem here is that the sources provide only a glimpse into the context surrounding this gifting activity; further details

[426] This idea is explored in the theoretical discussion in this thesis: chapter 2, section II.2. See also Maines & Glynn (1993) 10; Meskell (2005) 5.
[427] See chapter 5, section II.3 of this thesis for more on commemorative objects.

relating it to a specific event do not exist. It must be remembered that lack of evidence does not equate to a corresponding absence in Late Antiquity. Many of the examples of homemade gifts may well have been in relation to specific events that we have no information on. However, such references can be also interpreted as an adherence to broader social roles within society. The majority of the 'ad hoc' issues of gifts represent women sending objects to other, often male, relatives. Is this evidence of gift giving as an observance of a more subtle social convention? The culturally determined duties of women in the late antique period included spinning and weaving – something discussed in more depth in chapter 6 of this thesis. Therefore providing gifts of homemade tunics and cloaks for close relatives would meet the social expectation relating to this activity. More broadly perhaps, gift giving also reflects the accepted gender role relating to women as the main caregivers within late antique society; if a woman was not to remain a virgin, then she should be a caring and dutiful wife and mother.[428] In SB 22.15453 Sarapios explains that she sends Ammonios a gift because she cares for him. Whether Sarapios' explanation is true or not, it does demonstrate the use of material culture to show correct social behaviour through gift giving. It is also notable that many of the examples of this kind of behaviour come from the documentary papyri in the form of letters between individuals separated by distance. In such circumstances, material gifts, either in the forms of letters or other objects, are one of the only ways in which to maintain relationships and continue to provide comfort, assistance, and affection - whether this action was heartfelt or otherwise.

The contexts of gift exchange shown here demonstrate moments within systems of reciprocity. The formal events tied to the giving of gifts all occurred regularly; for example, birthdays, festivals, and anniversaries are annual events. This creates a repetitive structure in which gifts are exchanged on a regular basis over a number of years, demonstrating the obligation between parties to exchange gifts that Mauss discusses.[429] By extension, this also provides a framework of behaviour upon which relationships between people can be built and maintained. Even events such as weddings, which have no formal schedule, occur relatively regularly within a family, as generations grow up, marry and have children of their own. This repetition of behaviour and reciprocity of donation is

[428] Nathan (2000) 150.
[429] Mauss (1966) 10-11.

emphasised by P.Flor.3.332, quoted above, in which the writer states that it is right on the occasion of a wedding to make a 'return' gift to a relative, underlining the continued exchange between parties at such events over time. Reciprocity can also be identified in the use of gift giving as a method to achieve desired behaviours from another. For example, imperial gifts were used by emperors not only to bestow favour, as is seen with the money given to soldiers who performed well in battle; it was also a pragmatic tool. It helped to ensure loyalty and oiled the wheels of social action. This can be seen in John Malalas' description of the gifts given by Justinian to the Queen of the Sabir Huns, which helped to persuade her to move against enemies of the Empire.[430] Gifts in these circumstances create allegiances and a sense of favour, debt and the need for reciprocal action. As such gift giving was a key tool in diplomatic engagements. On a smaller scale, the same actions can be seen in the gifts distributed by consuls, such as the ivory diptychs, and the silver bowls sent by Symmachus in the fourth century.[431] Here reciprocity in kind is the desired outcome of the transaction, as the donors use gifts as a material way to keep people 'on side'. To have such a tool to hand was invaluable, as it was easier and more effective to control others through persuasion rather than force.

V.2. Gift Objects & Issues of Value

When turning to the gifted objects themselves, we find a high level of similarity between the heirlooms discussed in the previous chapter, and the objects found within the sources here. This is especially true concerning objects of high economic value, such as silver plate, jewellery, books, and clothing; these all feature prominently within the collated evidence. As previously discussed, both Hendy and Leader-Newby emphasise how objects such as silver plate simultaneously represented and embodied wealth, in comparison to coinage, which was not considered to have the same impact in terms of ability to display social status and personal wealth.[432] These signifiers of prosperity are also predominantly objects of display. To give a gift of this kind allows the communication of messages about not only the donor but also the recipient when displayed in the home. These messages relate to personal prosperity, issues of taste, fashion, generosity and, as such, function to compliment the giver as much as the recipient. Considering that the giving of gifts

[430] Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.13; trans. Jeffreys, *et al.* (1986).
[431] Symmachus. *Ep. 7.76* ; trans. Callu (1995).
[432] See discussion in chapter 3, section III.2. Leader-Newby (2004) 26-7; Hendy (2008) 219.

is understood to create and maintain relationships, the prestige of the donated objects also relates to the perceived value of the connection being made. Similarly, prestigious objects of high economic worth can signal the importance of the donor, recipient, or the occasion at which they are given – or even be used in an attempt to elevate it.

Money however does still appear in the sources as a gift. At festivals, such as the New Year Kalends, it was donated in the form of single gold coins. Whether meaning would be assigned to such gifts and if gifted singular coins would have been kept is unknown.[433] However, these items have a clear affinity with the giving of presents, as their uniformity of value lends itself to giving gifts to a number of people. By giving a coin to all recipients, all the gifts are of equal value – there is no apparent favouritism as all the donated objects are essentially identical in both appearance and economic value. This is an idea discussed by Janes in relation to the choice of objects bequeathed through inheritances. He states that gifts of personal items, such as silver plate, after death represent a level of intimacy in the relationship between giver and recipient, whereas giving cash had the advantage of providing equality of gifts amongst friends.[434] The same can be argued in relation to gifts amongst the living, as demonstrated by the coins given at Kalends. A similar phenomenon can be identified in the donation of imperial gifts. Medallions, such as the one from the Beaurains hoard that belonged to Vitalian, have specific monetary values assigned to them. Similarly, imperial gifts of silver plate, such as the Missorium of Theodosius, had their weight inscribed upon the reverse. This creates a transparency in terms of economic value – with such information there could be no illusions over the worth of the objects being given and comparisons between examples of *largitio* could be easily made. This ties in well with the role of these objects as a form of supplementary income to soldiers' wages during this period. In contrast, the donation of unique or singular items suggests a perceived level of singularity or uniqueness in the relationship between the donor and recipient; the object functions as a reflection of the distinctiveness of the people who the gift connects.

[433] See chapter 3, section III.2.
[434] Janes (1998b) 366.

High economic worth is relatively easy to identify in evidence, but is not the only kind of value that gift objects can have. The sources record the giving of gifts of lower quality or value items, suggesting that the economic value of the material goods was not the only consideration when choosing a gift for another. Gifts of practical use – such as household objects, texts, and consumables – were also made. There were also objects reminiscent of the luxury goods discussed above, but made in cheaper materials or decorated in a lower quality. Such items relied upon the recognised form of luxury gift objects – in terms of object type, form, and iconography – to employ the same visual language. For example, glass could be used in place of silver or gold.[435] Similarly the glass vessels featuring gold decorative bases give the illusion of expense whilst actually using very little of the precious materials. Value is of course a relative concept, and depends upon the economic status of the donor and recipient. The 'poorer quality' gold-based vessels might still represent a significant financial outlay for some individuals, or be beyond the reach of the poorest in society.

The giving of ivory diptychs provides an interesting consideration of the different scales of value present in gift objects. The material of ivory represents an expensive commodity. It could only be sourced from the edges of the Empire, where the natural habitat of elephants was found. The use of this material therefore had connotations of imperial power and prestige, as it had to be obtained from so far away. The objects themselves also demonstrate a high level of skill – witnessed in the high relief carvings often achieved in their decorations, which would take time to produce. The results are valuable and prestigious objects. When associated with gift giving and the status of the consuls who distributed them, they gain additional value in terms of meaning. However, unlike silver plate, the carved ivory leaves of the consular diptychs do not have a bullion value, and therefore cannot be melted down and reused to make other objects. This is something discussed by Antony Eastmond in relation to the consular diptychs of the sixth century. He highlights the fact that their value lies in the prestige of receiving the object as a gift, as in material terms the diptychs are essentially worthless to the recipient as there is no realizable value.[436] However this lack of realizable value in itself has worth, as the objects were consequently inflexible and thus

[435] Oliver (1975) 70.
[436] Eastmond (2010) 750.

inalienable, guaranteeing the preservation of the consul's memory.[437] This distinct form of material permanence afforded to the objects by the ivory means the objects are likely to have a relatively long life; certainly the prestige of their material and biography suggests they are unlikely to have been discarded, therefore their form would remain relatively unchanged within the domestic environment. Their accumulation of memory and meaning would thus be better ensured, combatting the natural degeneration that humans experience over time and which inalienable objects seek to resist.[438] In addition, it is plausible that other kinds of value are also present for these gift objects. The combination of material, production technique, and subject matter might also have produced a level of artistic appreciation and value that ensured their worth as artefacts to successive owners who had no direct link with the original gift-giving context. Certainly, this would explain the curation of such pieces to the present day.

The other kind of gift object that appears prominently in the sources of evidence is perishable items such as food and drink. Fruit is recorded as being given at Kalends and the papyrological record reveals various foodstuffs being sent and received with letters across late antique Egypt. The key feature of such consumables is that, generally speaking, they are non-permanent; they are either used up or physically degenerate over time, a factor that suggests they cannot become meaningful objects and have little material value.[439] Such gifts suggest that their value resides in the *act* of giving rather than the object exchanged, as it does not have the durability within the home to be a material reminder of the donor or context of donation. Their role within such transactions is therefore instead the creation and maintenance of a relationship and the fulfilment of the social requirement of gift giving. However, such gifts can also be interpreted as symbols of care – food and drink can both provide comfort physically and psychologically. This is an interesting point in light of the fact that in the letters the foodstuffs are exchanged between individuals separated by some distance. This action allows the provision of physical contact and comfort in otherwise impossible circumstances.

[437] Eastmond (2010) 751. These objects also have a role as souvenir items – chapter 5, section II.3.
[438] Weiner (1992) 7.
[439] Weiner (1992) 38.

It also needs to be noted that a lack of material permanence does not mean that such items are inexpensive or valueless. Firstly, certain food types can be preserved, either before or after sending, whilst products such as wine can be kept for longer periods compared to fresh produce. There is also no reason why certain foods in the right conditions could not be kept as mementoes, as slices of wedding cake are preserved today. In addition, some types of food and drink would have been expensive to purchase and therefore would represent luxury goods. Certainly various kinds of wines were more expensive than others, as demonstrated by those listed in Diocletian's Price Edict.[440] Again this provides evidence of scales of value and layers of different meaning inherent in gifted objects.

V.3. Gifts as Material Symbols

This chapter has demonstrated that gifts, through their biography, are symbolic of their donor; furthermore they had the potential to provide a surrogate physical presence for otherwise absent people.[441] However the object can also symbolise the individuals connected through gift action in more tangible ways. Gifts can include an image of the donor or recipient, seen prominently in the portraits included on gifts of imperial silver ware and the glass vessel base featuring Orfitus and his wife. Even generic images can be given individual identities through the iconographic style used combined with the context of depiction and additional inscriptions. On a more personal level, certain kinds of gifted objects are symbolic of a person's identity through their role as a material index of their labour.[442] Letters and other texts featuring the handwriting of the donor provide physical proof of their presence within the object. Similarly, the construction of textual content – such as the texts exchanged at Easter – is a mark of the donors' power to create and give. The same is true of other kinds of handmade objects - the baskets and clothing mentioned within the documentary texts represent material manifestations of a person's labour, and their own agency to make and donate. Often connections can also be ascertained between the physical nature of the gifted object and the context of the gift donation. Wedding iconography – such as that on the Projecta Casket – refers directly to the union between two people that the object celebrates. If such

[440] For example, ordinary wine is priced at 8 denarii per pint, whereas wine of the 'first quality' is at 24 denarii per pint. *Edict Dioc.* 2.8-10; trans. Graser (1959).
[441] For presence of donor in gifts, see Mauss (1966) 10, Gregory (1982) 45, Sherry (1983) 159. For objects as surrogates, see Belk (1988) 144, Gell (1998) 23-24, Gamble (1998) 443.
[442] Gell (1998) 23-24; Marx (2000) 499.

an item was indeed given as a wedding present, then the physical appearance of the object makes constant reference to the context in which it was received. Inscriptions can ensure the moment of donation is memorialised on the object itself, again linking the context of the giving with the gift object in material terms. Looking to the exchange of gifts at festivals, the evidence for texts suggests that at least for the Christian festival of Easter, tracts of a religious nature were deemed suitable. This is likely through their association with the religious nature of the holiday. In this way, the objects and context in which the gift is given can be seen to echo one another. All of this reinforces of the concept of gifts functioning as material symbols of donors and events.

The materiality of gifts, and their associations with donors and the context of giving, also allows the objects to represent the connection made between individuals through gift exchange.[443] As well as conforming to traditions of behaviour and lubricating social transactions, one of the main purposes of gift giving is to create relationships and maintain these connections. As such, the gifted objects can be seen as material symbols representative of these relationships – connections which are themselves intangible and for which the objects provide a physical trace. Letters are the most striking example of this, tracing as they do relationships between individuals across time and space. Imperial gifts also behave as such, as the objects are symbolic of the perceived relationship between the emperor and his subject.

Such imperial items also help to highlight the transience of meaning that such evocative gifts can have. The prominence of imagery relating to the donor and the relationship symbolised by the gift means that should changes in personal or public opinion occur, the meaning the object has is also liable to change. The unpredictability of an emperor's popularity over successive reigns is known to result in practices such as *damnatio memoriae*, which affect material representations of disgraced emperors, as their image and names are expunged from public statuary and records.[444] In such circumstances the ownership or, at the very least, the public display of an object representing a connection between a person and the emperor would not be viable. This might explain in part the finding of imperial gifted silverware within economic hoards and as hacksilver; for example, the

[443] Gregory (1982) 41.
[444] See for example the famous destruction of the name and image of Geta, son of Septimius Severus, in the third century AD. Varner (2004) 170-184.

Missorium of Theodosius was found folded in half with physical signs of attempts to cut it up. At this point it is clear that such objects had no value other than the silver content. However, perhaps such action can be further interpreted as a response to a dangerous or undesirable image that is no longer suitable for display because of its symbolic connection with the imperial court.

Such interpretations can be made for other less prominent kinds of gifts on a more personal scale; since all gifts represent a connection with their donor, there is simultaneously the potential for this connection to become an unwanted characteristic. It is easy to interpret gifts as possessions that would be treasured as material mementoes of such gift activity and as symbols of dear friends, family, and events. However, this is only one possible meaning that gift giving creates and does not necessarily reflect the impetus nor outcome of exchanging gifts. As discussed above, gift giving often occurred as a response to social pressures and as an adherence to traditional behaviours within late antique society. This is clearly evidenced in the letter P.Flor.3.332, which includes the postscript referring to disagreements that occur between family members. We see that social convention is the impetus behind the gift giving, rather than a desire to provide objects in celebration of marriage or as a sign of affection to others. Indeed, the example above reminds us that the desire to provide a material representation of the relationship between two individuals or as a sign of love would not always have been the reason for the exchange of gifts, and that gifts would have been given between individuals who may have actively disliked each other and been in conflict. As such, to assume all gifts were later viewed with nostalgia and happily associated with the giver would be wrong; we cannot assume in all cases that the objects would have been treasured. In fact the capacity of objects to hold memories means that it was just as likely to be a reminder of an awkward or unpleasant relative. In such cases, the giving of money seems to be an even more suitable gift as it allows the purchase of other goods and is more difficult to hold an affinity with the identity of the giver as it is indistinguishable from other material currency in the owner's possession. In these cases, it is the act of giving and adherence to tradition that is more important than the actual objects donated.

CHAPTER 5: SECULAR & SACRED SOUVENIRS

I. INTRODUCTION

The meanings of souvenirs as possessions come from their association with a place or event; their material presence provokes memories of these dominant biographical features in the mind of their owner. Most often, souvenirs are mementoes of travels, journeys, and visits. However, they can also be taken as mementoes of events or important occasions.[445] As such, souvenirs have a place within the meaningful material culture of the home. In this chapter, the evidence for souvenir objects within the homes of Late Antiquity will be examined. This examination hopes to reveal the range of objects that formed souvenirs in Late Antiquity and the contexts in which they were acquired. From these standpoints conclusions about their role as meaningful objects in the lives of their owners will be drawn.

We often think of souvenirs in relation to our modern holidays and the mass-produced objects bought as tokens of time spent away from home. Such a conception can seem anachronistic when considering the material culture of the late antique period. Much of our concept of recreational time and travel is linked to leisure, a notion commonly associated with the work of Veblen and Marx and thus associated with industrialised capitalist societies of the modern period.[446] However, the evidence available shows that during the broad span of 'antiquity', free time did exist and was spent on pleasurable pursuits of various sorts. Of these pursuits, there is clear evidence that travel and visits to places or events featured amongst them.

I.1. Late antique "holidays"?

Lomine's article on Augustan tourism demonstrates that tourist routes around the Roman Empire were established prior to the late antique period, and that people who had the means and opportunity would travel, visiting places and accumulating experiences and souvenirs.

[445] There is some overlap between the discussion of the souvenirs of events and that of gifts in chapter 4. Previous evidence will be referred to as and when necessary. This overlap furthermore demonstrates the multiple layers of meaning and identity that can be revealed through study of an object's biography. This addressed directly in the conclusion of the thesis.

[446] See MacCannell (2013) for discussion of leisure time and tourism in post-industrial society.

She highlights the Latin word *otium*, meaning leisure or productive free time, which could be used for travel and tourism for its own sake.[447] Popular tourist routes in the Augustan period included Greece, Egypt and Asia Minor, with souvenirs being brought back often in the form of miniature versions of famous sights such as statues or temples.[448] In material form, we also find evidence of the material culture of travel prior to Late Antiquity, such as the Vicarello Goblets, which date from the first century AD. These four silver beakers list more than 100 post stations on the route between Gades (modern day Cadiz in Spain) and Rome; their form represents mile markers, perhaps referring specifically to a monument in the city of Gades.[449] These objects served as useful travel cups and guides to the road, emphasising the length of the journey between the two cities. [450] They demonstrate not only the popularity of travel but also the desire of travellers to memorialise these experiences in material form, through souvenirs that functioned to remind them of their journeys. Vessels identified as souvenirs have also been identified in the extremes of the Roman Empire; the Rudge Cup is a second century vessel thought to be a souvenir from Hadrian's Wall (fig. 1). The bronze cup features geometric decoration that echoes the appearance and texture of the wall through squares and 'crenellations', accompanied by moulded text listing the names of the forts at the western end of Hadrian's Wall from west to east.[451] Not only does the decorative pattern of the Rudge Cup echo the visual appearance of the wall through the brickwork pattern, it also reflects the location and the experience of travel along the wall through the listed forts and the order they are read in. The physical experience of visiting Hadrian's Wall is therefore summoned through the materiality of the souvenir object. It is apparent therefore that there already existed a tradition of secular souvenir objects associated with specific locations in the period prior to Late Antiquity.

A variety of textual sources also reveal the kinds of travel undertaken in Late Antiquity. Various pilgrims left accounts of their travels, documenting not only their own journey and experiences en route, but also providing advice to others who wish to undertake similar trips – the main examples

[447] Lomine (2005) 71.
[448] Lomine (2005) 73-74. Such miniatures are discussed further below, see section II.1.
[449] Elsner (2000) 185.
[450] Shaya (2013) 105.
[451] Breeze (2012) 1-2. Above the decoration are inscribed the names of five forts at the western end of the wall: MAIS [Bowness-on-Solway] ABALLAVA [Burgh-by-Sands] VXELODUM [Stanwix] CAMBOGLANS [Castlesteads] BANNA [Birdoswald].

are the writings of Egeria, the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim, and the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*.[452] Texts were also produced explicitly for travellers themselves – the remains of guidebooks reveal the kinds of locations that people visited and their motivations for doing so. From the early-sixth century comes the *Breviarius of Jerusalem*, which highlighted and guided readers to the holiest Christian relics within the city.[453]

Moving forward in time to the eighth century, there is a text that highlights the sights of Constantinople; directing inhabitants of the city to the important urban attractions, the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* demonstrates the lasting popularity of such activities and the desire to see famous and culturally significant monuments oneself.[454] This is something recognisable from other texts such as Procopius' *Buildings*, which whilst written as a panegyric, nonetheless reveals the sixth-century fashion for cataloguing buildings and an interest in the physical history of the urban environment.[455] These kinds of texts do not represent guidebooks, however they do demonstrate the contemporary appeal of famous sights – factors that seem to have motivated individuals to travel and see renowned places for themselves.

Overall, despite initial assumptions that during the Roman period and Late Antiquity travel was rare or only for necessity, it seems rather that people could and did make journeys away from their homes. Handley's study of the epigraphic evidence for travellers within the late antique West demonstrates that travel was indeed very common, with a broad spectrum of travellers present on the routes around the Empire.[456] Generally speaking, travel during Late Antiquity was polydirectional and both long and short distance, with destinations either representing short visits or new permanent homes.[457] Similarly, the papyrological evidence from Egypt shows that travel was common during our period; Adams suggests that in Egypt even the poor could manage to find the time and opportunity to make short journeys.[458] From Oxyrhynchus comes a letter dated to the

[452] For Egeria and the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, see Wilkinson (2006); for the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim see Wilkinson (1977).
[453] *Breviarius of Jerusalem*; trans. Wilkinson (2006).
[454] Cameron & Herrin (1984).
[455] Av. Cameron (1985) 90.
[456] Handley (2011) 51
[457] Handley (2011) 107-8.
[458] Adams (2001) 157.

third to fourth century in which the writer expresses a desire to get away for a while in order to escape the hot weather – this is clearly a trip that would be made for pleasure rather than business.[459] The motivations for travel were similarly as diverse as the travellers. Handley states that soldiery was the most common reason for long distance travel, with members of the military from across the Roman provinces finding themselves stationed far away from their original home.[460] This is also clear from textual sources, such as the description from Ammianus Marcellinus recording how in AD 360 the Emperor Constantius II ordered troops sourced from Gaul to be sent to the East of the Empire to repel the Persian forces there.[461]

As briefly mentioned above, another important reason for travel was religion. Other than exile and migration for religious reasons, pilgrimage became increasingly popular, as Christians added to the ranks of existing Jewish and pagan travellers who visited holy sites and people across the Empire. Ecclesiastical travel for church business also provided a reason for the movement of people, as activities such as the transport and deposition of relics accounted for many of the journeys made during Late Antiquity.[462] The church was not the only instigator of business travel. Trade and commercial endeavours ensured that people accompanied produce and business transactions. A fourth-century *ostracon* from Karanis records the transportation of ten donkeys of grain via the donkey driver Sotas.[463] Waterways were also important in late antique Egypt, and a fifth-century document reports the transportation of cargo from the port in Oxyrhynchus to Alexandria, no doubt via the Nile which functioned as the main transport thoroughfare within the country.[464] Therefore opportunities to visit well-known locations, conduct some sight seeing, and purchase souvenirs as mementoes were more frequent than one might initially think.

As the title of this chapter suggests, the discussion of these objects will be divided broadly into two main parts. The first will deal with souvenirs that commemorate secular events or are mementoes

[459] P.Oxy.34.2727.
[460] Handley (2011) 57. Contact between Roman soldiers and native "barbarian" peoples beyond the limits of the Roman Empire has been discussed via analysis of fragments of Roman military chainmail, found in late Roman graves in modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia. These have been interpreted as amuletic objects or even souvenirs of the distant Roman provinces. See Czarnecka (1994).
[461] Ammianus Marcellinus, 20.4.1-11; trans. Rolfe (1935).
[462] Handley (2011) 59.
[463] O.Mich.1.546
[464] P.Wisc.2.65.

from visits to places undertaken for non-religious reasons. The second part of this chapter will look specifically at the objects associated and brought back from spiritual journeys and pilgrimages to the holy sites of Late Antiquity.

II. Secular Souvenirs

II.1. Souvenirs from places

The first kind of souvenir to be discussed here is what might also be considered the most obvious kind; one that depicts as decoration or represents in physical form the location it comes from and seeks to commemorate. These are the souvenirs of exterior sights that Stewart discusses.[465] Such objects are usually produced explicitly as souvenirs and depict one well-known element of their place of origin. Favro explains that it can be difficult to represent towns or cities visually because they are often too large and manifold to be easily characterised; therefore souvenirs rely on the representation of urban icons, which act as visual substitutes for this multifaceted whole.[466] For example, a souvenir from a specific city might be in the form of a miniature version of a recognisable sight from that place, or feature a visual representation of it as decoration. Such icons allow the expression of the character of that place and offer the owner of the souvenir a sense of possession of the place through their ownership of the object.[467]

Evidence for such typical souvenir objects can be found in the textual and archaeological record of the late antique period. The well-known archive of Theophanes, whose journey from Egypt to Antioch was recorded in the fourth century AD, preserves lists of accounts and expenses relating to the logistical aspect of such an expedition. In these documents, it is recorded that Theophanes purchased a gilded statue of the emperor (presumably a miniature) whilst in Ascalon.[468] No price for the object survives and Matthews interprets it as an object bought for dedication in a temple.[469] It is interesting to note however that the purchase is listed alongside other expenses including entrance fees to the theatre, suggesting a day of recreation in Ascalon; perhaps this statuette was not a dedication but rather purchased as a memento of the trip?

[465] Stewart (1993) 138. See chapter 2, section III.2 for a full discussion.
[466] Favro (2006) 20.
[467] Favro (2006) 21.
[468] P.Ryl.627 v.i.214.
[469] Matthews (2006) 51.

Objects depicting famous monuments can be found in the archaeological record. The renowned statue of the Tyche of Antioch, by a pupil of Lysippos, was copied for visitors to purchase as souvenirs – fig. 36 is one extant version dating from the first to second century AD and now held in the Louvre. It copies the original statue in that it depicts the goddess Tyche seated on a rock with one foot on a swimming youth, the personification of the river Orontes on which the city of Antioch sits. Mould blown glass bottle representations of the statue were also available in the second to third century, such as the example in fig. 37 now held in the Yale University Art Gallery. These bottles were produced in Antioch and bought as souvenirs by visitors or for installation in a household shrine.[470] This specific representation is also found in the late fourth-century Esquiline Treasure hoard from Rome, in the form of a silver and gold statuette that functioned as a furniture mount. That this form of representation was still known in Late Antiquity is perhaps a sign of the continued production of souvenir imagery and their circulation in society.

There is a group of objects originating from Puteoli and Baiae in the Bay of Naples that are similarly associated through their form with a specific place. Instead of being in the shape of a miniature version of a famous monument, these souvenirs are glass flasks decorated with scenes of the cities they represent. These flasks, collectively known as the Puteoli-Baiae group, date from the late-third to -fourth century and feature architectural scenes, townscapes and identifying inscriptions (fig. 38).[471] Furthermore, not only have they been found elsewhere in Italy, but also across the Roman Empire, in Spain, Portugal, Germany, North Africa and Great Britain; such a geographical spread further supports their status as souvenir objects, taken from their place of origin and deposited in the homes of those who visited the towns.[472] Puteoli was one of the most important commercial and military harbours on the West coast of Italy, as well as being one of the most fashionable residential areas south of Rome, along with its close neighbour Baiae.[473] Both of these towns, Baiae in particular, were famed for their mineral-rich waters, and consequently attracted high numbers of visitors every year, allowing the towns to develop into high profile

[470] Matheson, ed. (1994) 115.
[471] See Ostrow (1979) for full discussion of depicted topography and identifying inscriptions on these vessels.
[472] Fujii (2009) 136.
[473] Painter (1975) 61.

resorts, which focused on bathing, socialising, and leisure.[474] Therefore it is unsurprising that such places would have vendors catering to visitors and providing them with souvenirs as mementoes of their holidays. Furthermore, Jackson suggests that not only were these flasks sold as souvenirs to the many visitors to the towns, but also might well have been used to drink the spa waters for which these resorts were lauded.[475] Certainly the rim of the Prague flask, one of the Puteoli-Baiae collection, is ground smooth making it safe to drink from.[476] Their decoration – namely the coastal scenes – also seems appropriate for vessels intended for holding liquids. However, the overview of the extant fragments conducted by Painter shows that the vast majority of the vessels had constricted openings at the base of the necks.[477] This feature would impede the flow of liquid, like a dropper, suggesting that the object's use was in a medicinal or toilet, as opposed to dining, context. The drinking of spa waters was not an uncommon therapeutic activity, and is referred to through the imagery on the Otañes plate (fig. 39, discussed further below), which shows a seated figure being brought spring water in a cup-like vessel.[478] Other scholars have suggested that the prominent representation of a temple, perhaps of Serapis, on some of the vessels hints to a role as ritual objects taken home by initiates to the cult of Isis and Serapis who made their pilgrimage to the temple in Puteoli; however as Ostrow makes clear, this is far from certain.[479]

These flasks, of a round globular form listed as no. 103 in the Isings glass catalogue, were decorated with wheel cut imagery based upon the seaside location of the towns.[480] The features depicted on the flask are labelled with inscriptions and generally depict a seaside scene. For example the Prague flask shows Puteoli and includes the city's stadium, a temple, the harbour mole or breakwater, a *solarium* (either a sundial or a sun terrace), a *lararium*, amphitheatre, colonnades, *palaestra*, and docks (fig. 40).[481] Inscriptions are included to make completely clear what is depicted, especially important for anyone viewing the object that has not visited themselves or is

[474] Jackson (1990) 5-6.
[475] Jackson (1990) 7.
[476] Fujii (2009) 136.
[477] Painter (1975) 54-60.
[478] Dvorjetski (2007) 112.
[479] Ostrow (1979) 89. See also Tran Tam Tinh (1972) 26-27.
[480] Isings (1957) 121-22.
[481] Ostrow (1979) 93-97.

not familiar with the sights of the town.[482] The number of fragments found across the Mediterranean (and beyond) and the relative uniformity of decorative content and style suggests that these souvenir flasks were produced in reasonably large numbers. It seems that a set number of decorative scenes were incised on the regular glass vessels to form ready-made and purchasable souvenirs for visitors to the towns. These flasks feature around the upper parts of their bodies, just below the neck, inscriptions of varying sorts that were likely engraved at the specific request of the purchaser.[483] These inscriptions are similar to those we find on the wedding gifts discussed in the previous chapter – for example commemorative inscriptions or exhortations of different kinds. In this way it seems that visitors to the towns could buy a premade souvenir that referred to the geographical location, but also personalise it through the added inscriptions.

Bathing establishments were popular places to visit during this period and other apparent souvenir objects have also been found. From Otañes in Northern Spain comes a silver bowl featuring a series of vignettes depicting scenes from a spa (fig. 39). The decoration is accompanied by the inlaid gilt inscription SALVS UMERITANA, referring to Salus, the Roman god of health, alongside a reference to the previously unknown medicinal spring of Umeri, possibly located in the Pyrenees.[484] The decoration on this object, instead of referring to the appearance of Umeri as a location, instead focuses on the activities for which the resort was known. Visitors would likely attend for the spa treatments and the water therapies available, hence the suitability of decoration showing spa routines as opposed to architectural detail. The focus on bathing activities is further enhanced by the reference to the Roman god of Health in the inscription.

Representations of famous sights appear as decoration on other domestic objects, again making it plausible that those objects functioned as souvenirs. One candidate is the glass bottle found in a grave excavated near Poetovio, modern day Ptuj in Slovenia (fig. 41). It dates from between the

[482] The full inscription on the Prague Flask reads: Felix pie zesaes cum tuis // stadiu(m) solariu(m) Lari strata pos() foru(m) Isiu(m) / Putioli // Pilae // pe/la/gu(m) // amp(h)itheat(rum) theatru(m) decatria // ordion pales C(a)esari Nimisia // ortesiana rip(a) / inpuriu(m) sacoma. This translates as "Fortunate one, drink, so you may live happily with your (loved ones). Stadium; sundial; Lares; paved streets behind the forum; shrine of Isis; Puteoli; Breakwater; open sea; amphitheatre; theatre; region of the thirteen gods; Hordionian region; palaestra; imperial shrine; Numisian region; Hortensian quay; harbour; weigh station; steps of god."
[483] Ostrow (1979) 77.
[484] Jackson (1990) 12.

end of the second and the beginning of the fourth century AD.[485] This vessel depicts the Pharos lighthouse at Alexandria, recognizable due to its stepped architecture and the statue of Zeus Soter that sat atop the structure.[486] It is missing its mouth and rim, however features a broad handle for pouring the contents of the vessel. The style of decoration on the vessel combined with the inclusion of fish motifs suggests it belongs to the 'contour groove group' of vessels, originating from high quality Egyptian workshops.[487] The fact that it was found in a grave in modern day Slovenia demonstrates how far this object had travelled, and was perhaps purchased by a visitor to the famous city of Alexandria. Alexandria was a key seaport for trade and travel around the Mediterranean, and the lighthouse, a monument considered to be a wonder of the ancient world, would have greeted many visitors as they entered the city by boat. The structure was substantial – slightly taller than the Statue of Liberty – and would no doubt have made a huge impression on visitors and Alexandrians alike, forming a key component of the city's topography.[488] Therefore it seems likely that souvenir objects featuring the Pharos would be popular with both vendors and visitors, representing as it does a renowned and identifiable element of the city in terms of both the physical and psychological topography of the urban environment. As a souvenir object, the decorated Pharos bottle relies on a form of collective memory, representing a well-known and easily recognizable element of Alexandria, likely familiar to those who have not visited the monument in person. The image of the Alexandrian Pharos was certainly circulated on coins and depicted in mosaics, such as the sixth-century representation from Qasr-el-Lebia in Cyrene, modern day Libya.[489] The monument's depiction on the vessel from Poetovio also refers to the 'texture' of the city as experienced by visitors, in the way it suggests the experience of approaching the city by boat and the initial physical impressions of the urban landscape.[490]

As we have already witnessed with the silver souvenir dish from the spa of Umeri and the flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, the sense or identity of a place does not have to be communicated solely through imagery or physical form. Inscriptions as well as visual representations have an important

[485] Lazar (2009) 148.
[486] Lazar (2009) 150-51.
[487] Lazar (2009) 153-54.
[488] Haas (1997) 25-6.
[489] Price & Trell (1977) 180-82. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was also featured on coins: see Price & Trell (1977) 127-30.
[490] Adams, *et al.* (2001) xiii.

role in communicating their origins and the memories of a location. On the Hunting Plate of the Sevso Treasure (fig. 12), discussed in the previous chapters, is an inscription naming a body of water as "Pelso", the name for Lake Balaton in modern day Hungary. The presence of this inscription and the depiction of the lake as part of the hunting scene suggest some biographical connection between that location and the plate's owner. The central figures in the scene have been interpreted as Sevso, his wife, and others, enjoying the fruits of the lands that form their estate.[491] Therefore the inscription seems to locate this estate geographically by naming Lake Pelso. As a result it seems highly unlikely that the plate represents a souvenir of the type discussed above. However, the imagery and inscription still allow the object to function as memento of the owner's experiences, referencing Sevso's memories of his physical encounters with the estate.

Another inscribed object, also discussed in the previous chapter, is the gold glass vessel base depicting the busts Orfitus and Constantius with the figure of Hercules (fig. 25). As previously described, the vessel base includes an inscription referencing the Roman town of Acerentia, home to a cult of Hercules, who is also depicted on the object's decoration.[492] The naming of Orfitus and Constantius, alongside their portraits demonstrates that this object was commissioned as a gift on a specific occasion; both Howells and Cameron believe it to have been commissioned by the townsfolk of Acerentia themselves.[493] However, the object still refers to the location of Acerentia and therefore functions as a material memento of this location for Orfitus – perhaps associated with the experience of visiting the cult buildings of Hercules which is referred to on the object as a key part of the town's identity. Furthermore, as Howells states, the vessels that these bases once formed a part of were relatively cheap and could be produced on a large scale.[494] Therefore it is feasible that objects similar to the Orfitus and Constantius glass were manufactured on a reasonably large scale locally, and sold as souvenirs to those visiting the town or the cultic centre of Hercules. In this way, the identity of the object is inextricably tied to its geographical origin via the combination of inscription and decoration. Vessels with decorated gold bases were popular objects during the late antique period and featured a wide range of decorative schemes. Perhaps this vessel base was

[491] Dunbabin (2003b) 149.
[492] Cameron (1996) 296-8.
[493] Howells (2010) 276; Cameron (1996) 300.
[494] Howells (2010) 276-77.

once part of an object similar to the Puteoli – Baiae flasks, representing a specific type of object produced by a local workshop in relatively large quantities for visitors, but which could also be personalised by requesting specific imagery or inscriptions from the manufacturer.

The souvenirs of places that have so far been discussed have all featured an element of their appearance such as decoration, physical form or inscription, that link the object explicitly to their place of origin. However, there are other kinds of objects that can be taken as souvenirs of a place that do not directly reference that location through their materiality. These are what Susan Stewart describes as 'samples' of a place, and they function to store personal memories of experiences associated with a specific trip or event.[495] These kinds of souvenirs are difficult to identify, as they are personal to the owner; they are less reliant on the ready-made souvenir tropes discussed above, which depend upon collective memory and a common understanding of a place for their identity. As samples from a location, they need not even be purpose made objects but rather ordinary items that are typical of a culture – even natural items encountered during travels can be acquired as souvenirs.[496]

One such souvenir can be found by returning to the fourth-century archive of Theophanes. Whilst in Tyre, the purchase of a wine-jar "in the form of Silenus" is recorded; Matthews describes this object as "a typically tacky tourist's purchase" that if excavated at Hermopolis Magna, the home of Theophanes and findspot of the archive, would likely be considered a local product.[497] This seems to contrast with the seemingly reasonable quality of objects we have already discussed, such as the wheel cut decorations on the Puteoli-Baiae flasks and the Pharos jug. However, Dionysian themes on decorative objects and furnishing became increasingly popular in Late Antiquity, with the image of Silenus appearing on various kinds of objects, such as the fifth- to sixth-century woven hanging in fig. 42.[498] It also seems to be an object that has no clear association with Tyre, as emphasized by Matthews, meaning that the only link between the souvenir and location is in the mind of Theophanes, who knows the biography of the object and can remember the context of its

[495] Stewart (1993) 138.
[496] See Digby (2006) for her discussion of found objects as souvenirs of places and experiences.
[497] P.Ryl.630; Matthews (2006) 125.
[498] Stauffer (1995) 20.

acquisition. Therefore this seems to be a more personal kind of souvenir, one purchased as a memento of a journey and functioning to remind the owner of his time spent in Tyre.

II.2. Souvenirs or regional specialities?

Other kinds of objects have associations with geographical locations, as they are products or regional 'types' that originate in a specific place. In this way, such objects might also be considered as 'samples' as they represent the material culture of a town, region, or country. For example, the recipes of Apicius including foods associated with specific places – such as the Lucanian sausage, apparently hailing from Lucania in southern Italy.[499] Such names suggest an origin, or at least an aspect of the object's identity, which is associated with these locations. As such, they can also evoke memories of places in much the same way as souvenir objects. In the documentary papyri from late antique Egypt, there are many references to items that are described specifically in reference to their place of origin, usually through their identifying name. However whether these items were bought by their owner from their apparent source as souvenirs or whether they represent a popular exported product available locally is more difficult to ascertain. In addition these names could also represent generic products, where the geographical place name refers only to historical origin.

In the fourth-century centurion's will there is mention of a mysterious object called an *albandicum*; seemingly this is an object from the city of Alabanda in Caria, modern day Anatolia.[500] What this object was is unknown but due to the context of letter, Bagnall and Lewis suggest that it could be a weapon.[501] The extent to which soldiers travelled during this period has already been mentioned, therefore it is possible that the centurion acquired this *albandicum* himself whilst deployed in Caria. As such it would not only reflect the material culture of the area, but also evoke memories of his time spent there. Furthermore, if the object is indeed a weapon, it represents the livelihood of the soldier in material form, and as such would have close links to the way in which he used

[499] Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria* 2.4; trans. Flower & Rosenbaum (1958). The ingredients of Lucanian sausage listed by Apicius include pepper, cumin, savory, parsley, laurel berries, and pork.
[500] P.Col.7.188.
[501] Bagnall & Lewis (1979) 218.

material culture to represent and form his identity. This would be the case even if the object were a locally purchased import.

Further objects are listed in the dialysis document of AD 481, which catalogues the items that should be given to Theophilus as settlement in a legal action.[502] The objects include several items described as coming from Skinepeous: seven napkins and towels, a small mattress, a tablecloth, and a "garment".[503] Not much is known about Skinepeous, a small Egyptian town mentioned only in a few documentary papyri. However, the types of objects listed all seem to suggest that the town had a textile industry of sorts, as the Skinepeous products are mainly various kinds of household linens and domestic soft furnishings. Perhaps they represent items brought back from Skinepeous after a visit by the claimant in the dialysis. Other possibilities include that they were gifts or simply purchases that reflect the high quality or special production of textiles from this place. In this sense, these objects too could be considered samples of a location or experience and as such represent the town in material form. Such specialist products represent a specific and unique quality that singularizes these kinds of objects. As such, they would make suitable souvenirs of a visit to that location, functioning as they do as samples of that place's material culture. Such regional products provide a sense of authenticity not only in terms of the quality of the product (confirmed by the geographical origin) but also to the memories and visit of the person bringing the object back.

Many of the references within the papyri relate to foods described by their geographical source. One example is the fourth-century letter in which the writer informs the recipient that she has dispatched a small basket of Syrian dates along with some κανωπικὰ, translated as "Canopic" cakes.[504] The main descriptive element of these cakes is their apparent geographical origin. Canopic might well relate to the Alexandrian suburb of Canopus, where the main cult temples of the city were traditionally located.[505] These cakes, also attested in P.Oxy.14.1774, are according to Tandoi a type of muffin or scone made in the Canopic style; he states that they were clearly

[502] P.Princ.2.82.
[503] P.Princ.2.82. The dialysis document also contains other similar descriptions, namely of a Dalmatian cloak, a Damaskian shirt and an Egyptian cloak and cape. These are types of clothing that are attested reasonably frequently in other papyrological texts, and seem to be generic terms referring instead to a specific style or design of clothing, rather than the actual geographical origin of the garments.
[504] SB 8.9746 = SB 3.7243; trans. Bagnall & Cribiore (2006) 196.
[505] Haas (1997) 146.

different to the more usual *panis Alexandrinus*, although how we do not know.[506] It seems that this type of food was considered a regional speciality, although whether these exact specimens were bought within Canopus is unclear. Even less apparent is whether the writer of the letter actually obtained the cakes from Canopus herself. It seems unlikely that these objects could therefore function as souvenirs from the suburb. Similarly the Syrian dates mentioned within the text seem unlikely to have been purchased first-hand by the letter writer from Syria; more likely is that these dates – perhaps singularized for their taste or quality – were imported and bought more locally. Regional wines were also identified through their geographical origin. A poem of the fifth-century Sidonius Apollinarius describes the celebration of a sixteenth birthday: "As for wines, I have none of Gaza, no Chian or Falernian, none sent by the vines of Sarepta for you to drink".[507]

It seems that despite the link between the identity of these foods and their geographical origin, it is unlikely that such references in the documentary evidence represent souvenirs. Instead, they are probably regional specialities exported from their place of origin, or made locally to mimic these foreign products. Furthermore, as Weiner discusses in her work on inalienable possessions, it is difficult for food to have a souvenir function – its perishability and therefore lack of permanence means that it is unable to store memories over time.[508] However, a link between food and memory does exist and needs to be briefly explored further. The role of the senses in the construction and retrieval of memories has been explored by many scholars.[509] In the late-fourth century, St Augustine wrote that taste, along with touch and smell, was one of the lowest senses in the hierarchy of perception.[510] Yet food is nonetheless a part of the material world and as such can be related to people's relationships with the past; in fact memory is embodied and recalled through the sensations of smell and taste.[511] It is normal at this point to refer to Marcel Proust's famous description of the memories and sense of nostalgia that were provoked by his eating of a madeleine

[506] Tandoi (1959) 199.
[507] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems* 17; trans. Anderson (1963). The papyri from late antique Egypt show that the packing vessels such wine was stored in also had names associating the objects with their geographical origin; for example, the Gaza jar (Γαζίτιον) in P.Oxy. 16.1924. For full discussion, see Kruit & Worp (2000) 65-146.
[508] Weiner (1992) 38.
[509] For an overview of scholarship on the senses, including its association with memory, see Stewart (2005).
[510] Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will,* 2.14.38.147; trans. King (2010).
[511] Lupton (1998) 32

cake.[512] The point he makes is that the taste and smell of food has the power to provoke memories in the mind of the subject, and transport them to previous experiences, places, and people that have now passed. As such, a piece of food is unlikely to function as a souvenir or memento as most edibles, except perhaps for preserved items, will either be consumed or decompose over a relatively short period of time. However, the smells, flavours and textures that the food provides on eating can be recreated by later incarnations of the dish in question. Therefore the Canopic cakes mentioned in P.Oxy.14.1774 might not come from Canopus, but can though their appearance, aroma and texture reference the experience of eating these cakes in the Alexandrian suburb itself, and by extension provoke associated contextual memories of this experience. The authenticity of these memories is provided not by the original food specimen but rather the sensory experience of eating that dish.

Furthermore, food can behave much as souvenirs do in referencing a 'foreign' place or culture through its geographical origin and combinations of flavour, texture, ingredient or cooking style that are considered regionally specific. In his work, *The Culinary Triangle*, Lévi Strauss contemplates the way in which food communicates information about a culture through the transformations it undertakes at the hands of humans.[513] Lupton explains how culinary products and practises form and symbolise cultural identities and communities of people, helping to distinguish between different regions and nations.[514] In this way, foreign foods or regional specialities could again function as mementoes of other places.

II.3. Souvenirs of Events

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, souvenirs can be mementoes of occasions or events, as well as travels and visits to places. Consular diptychs, previously discussed in chapter 4 of thesis, represent objects that function to commemorate the accession to office of consuls. This is reflected in part through their functionality; these objects according to Bowes were conceived of as writing tablets, with a wax surface on their reverse onto which the names of consuls in

[512] Proust (2006) 63.
[513] Lévi-Strauss (2008) 36-43.
[514] Lupton (1998) 25-6.

chronological order would be listed, and the objects then kept for commemorative reasons.[515] The diptychs are therefore distributed as not only gifts but also mementoes – they form a material embodiment of the memory of the event. Furthermore, an integral part of the role of consul was the provision of celebratory games and entertainments, at which the diptychs were distributed to the consul's senatorial peers.[516] The Areobindus diptych from AD 506 (fig. 43) references this occasion directly, through the scenes of wild animals and acrobatic performers within an arena at the bottom of the ivory leaves. This imagery refers directly to the event at which the object was acquired, as well as concretising the memory of the consul's accession more broadly.

There is further evidence of souvenirs associated with games and public spectacle. Contorniate medallions survive to us today in large numbers and many of them can be directly related to late antique games and spectacles. Dating mainly from the second half of the fourth century, their appearance is not unlike coins, however they are larger, heavier and have a characteristic deep groove on the inside of their rim (fig. 44).[517] They often depict scenes from staged events or the architectural features of stadia and hippodromes, along with the profile of various famous people (often emperors) who were closely associated with the provision of public games. The main study of these medallions is by Alföldi and Alföldi, who suggest that their manufacture and distribution was a pagan reaction to the Christianisation of the Empire and the growing disapproval of these traditionally pagan attractions.[518] However, as Gwynne explains, there is little evidence that events such as public games ever became the focus for conflict between pagan and Christian groups in Late Antiquity; it is likely that the contorniates were actually distributed at the games as a form of traditional gift.[519]

Although given as gifts, these objects also functioned as souvenirs of the games events themselves, much as the diptychs discussed above do. Their iconography is often self-reflexive, depicting the venue or activity at which the medallion was donated. The decorative scheme therefore refers directly to the event at which the owner acquired the object. Holden discusses the iconography of

[515] Bowes (2001) 343.
[516] Bowes (2001) 338.
[517] Weitzmann (1979) 101.
[518] Alföldi & Alföldi (1990) vol.2, 25-34.
[519] Gwynne (2011) 149.

contorniates, specifically the set that depict the story of the abduction of the Sabine women, again dating to the second half of the fourth century. These medallions were issued by Constantius II in 357 AD to commemorate his visit to Rome and the associated games celebrating the anniversary of his accession.[520] The choice of iconography – the Abduction of the Sabine Women – was linked during Late Antiquity to circus entertainment because of its popularity as a narrative and the role that the first ever games had in the original story.[521] In fact, on the contorniate medallions, for example as seen in fig. 45, the turning posts of a hippodrome can be seen in the background alongside the inscription SABINAE, placing the Sabine narrative within the circus setting. The explicit link between the iconography of the contorniate medallion and public games commemorates not only the giving of the medallion as a gift, but also the event at which the gift was given. The object therefore functions as a souvenir of the event, and is associated with the memories of this in the mind of the owner.

Contorniate medallions are not the only kind of souvenir object associated with public entertainments; other objects depict chariot racing and gladiatorial combat.[522] From the second half of the fourth century comes a gold glass vessel base depicting a victorious charioteer identified by an inscription as Vincentius, along with his horse Imbictus (fig. 46).[523] Weitzmann describes this object as a memento of a popular and victorious idol.[524] In addition, the representation includes specific colours within the decoration, denoting the circus faction with which the racer was affiliated. Such objects, therefore, would be souvenirs not only of a day at the races but also commemorate the victory of a specific competitor. Furthermore, the circus faction that the owner of the object supported was also celebrated. The popularity of these kinds of objects is confirmed by another vessel, which features a different form of decoration but similar subject matter. Fig. 47 is a fourth-century glass beaker with an engraved scene depicting the triumphant charioteer Eutyches. Again the inclusion of an inscription identifying the charioteer and his four horses by name suggests the vessel identifies and commemorates a specific team and perhaps a specific

[520] Holden (2008) 122.
[521] Holden (2008) 122.
[522] The Colchester Cup, dating from the first century AD is an early yet famous example of this, reinforcing the popularity not only of this kind of event but also these activities as decorative motifs.
[523] The inscription reads VINCENTI NIKA or "Vincentius wins!", and IMBICTVS meaning "unconquered" or "unconquerable".
[524] Weitzmann (1979) 104.

triumph in the Hippodrome.[525] This makes it more likely to be a souvenir object from a particular event.

Aside from chariot racing, gladiatorial events are also depicted on souvenir objects. Fig. 48 is a gold glass vessel base that depicts a gladiator and features an inscription; dating to the late-fourth century, it is a rare late example of this iconographical subject. Howells discusses the meaning of the inscription on the vessel, which reads: STR TO NICA EBEN EVIC ISTI/ VADEIN AVRE LI A/ PIE ZESE S. Howells interprets the first part of the inscription as relating to the town of Stratoniceia, meaning that the inscription translates as, "You have conquered in Stratoniceia, go to Aurelia. Drink that you may live."[526] This kind of iconography forms part of a broader trend, which saw gladiatorial imagery used as decoration in a variety of contexts, including mosaics. The fourth-century mosaic in the National Archaeological Museum of Spain (fig. 49) depicts a pair of gladiators and identifies them by name, giving a commemorative aspect to the representation.[527] In earlier Roman times, gladiatorial combat was a popular decorative motif on souvenir objects; the popularity of charioteers and race events within the hippodrome filled the space left by gladiatorial combat within the theatres, as reflected by the change in the subject matter on these kinds of souvenirs. As Ewigleben explains, the popularity of gladiators ensured that a whole branch of the art industry was dedicated to exploiting this subject matter, and allowed fans to take home souvenirs of their heroes.[528] It seems that the vessels and other objects depicting triumphant charioteers were also functioning in a similar way.

Other events more personal in nature could also be commemorated through souvenir objects. The gold glass vessel bases discussed throughout this thesis often contain iconography and inscriptions that reflect occasions thought worthy of celebration and commemoration in Late Antiquity. In the previous chapter, gold glass vessels associated with weddings were discussed in relation to gift giving and the associated commemorative function of these objects. Other glass bases, such as the

[525] Weitzmann (1979) 99-100. The inscription reads EYTYX ΠYPIΠNOYC NIΛOC APEΘOYC CIMOC / "Eutyches; Puripnous; Nilos; Arethous; Simos".
[526] Howells (2010) 238-39.
[527] The mosaic's identifying inscription reads: *Astyanax vicit Kalendio Θ*, meaning "Astyanax wins, Kalendio dies". The Greek letter *theta* is used to signify the demise of the competitor Kalendio by representing the word *thanatos* or "death".
[528] Ewigleben (2000) 133.

example in fig. 50, suggest the commemoration of the New Year; the gilt message *anni boni* in the bottom of the vessel translates as the equivalent of "Happy New Year". There is also another which depicts a father and son, with an inscription naming the boy as Fortunis.[529] Howells states that the surviving iconography of the scene corresponds to the coming of age ceremony when a boy would receive his *toga virilise* from his father.[530]

III. Sacred Souvenirs

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, pilgrimage was a major reason for people to travel during the late antique period. These pilgrimages, sometimes of great lengths, were taken by the faithful in order to visit temples, shrines, and other places considered holy through associations with sacred narratives. Visits were also made to holy men and women, something that became increasingly popular with the advent of asceticism in the early Christian period. The traces of these religious journeys can be found in the archaeological record, in the form of architectural remains at the sites of religious centres – for example the remains of the huge pilgrim centre that developed around the column of St Symeon Stylites the Elder, in modern day Syria. Contributing to this evidence are the written descriptions of pilgrimages that survive from the late antique period, such as the testimony of Egeria, who travelled from Spain to the Holy Land, and the anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim. These texts provide us with details of the routes taken, the length of journey, and the places visited, as well as the activities that took place en route. However, of most relevance here is the evidence of the specific material culture that was associated with the activity of pilgrimage. From the archaeological record and descriptions of such journeys we find that not only did pilgrims leave objects as votive gifts but also took items away with them from sites as souvenirs.

Scholarship on pilgrimage in Late Antiquity is predominantly focused on the travels undertaken by faithful Christians, which can give the impression that this activity was exclusively associated with Christianity. However, pagan pilgrimage was not unknown. In earlier times, perhaps the most

[529] The full inscription reads: […] [CUM CON]IVGETVA. ETFORTVNIOFILIOTVO, translating to, "[…] with your wife and your son, Fortunis".
[530] Howells (2010) 241.

famous destination was the Oracle at Delphi in Greece, which attracted visitors from the Greek Archaic age through to the Roman Imperial period, after which point its popularity significantly decreased.[531] Pilgrims also visited the temple complex of Artemis in Ephesus until its destruction in the second half of the third century. Souvenirs were made at the site in the form of miniatures of the famous Artemis Ephesia statue which was displayed in the temple; fig. 51 is a terracotta version, whilst other figurines in bronze are also known.[532] As Elsner discusses, the centre at Ephesus produced these objects with the intention of their travel beyond the limits of the city.[533] These statuettes, along with engraved gems featuring the image of Artemis, have been found across Asia Minor, suggesting pilgrims were relatively local, and the objects – representative of the kinds of souvenirs generated by pagan cults – were kept within the homes of such pilgrims.[534] The cult association of the souvenirs of the Artemis Ephesia supports the purchase of souvenir miniatures as religious mementoes and objects suitable for domestic veneration; such objects would function as souvenirs of their pilgrimage but also have a devotional or amuletic purpose, being incorporated into household shrines and domestic worship. Furthermore, Ephesus' Temple of Artemis was a very famous landmark – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – which made it likely to attract large numbers of visitors. As Favro states, the purchasing of an iconic cityscape allowed ancient tourists to reinforce their mnemonic possession of the site of their visit.[535] Such mass produced objects would also provide an easy and accessible memento for tourists to the site to take home, to concretize their memories of the visit.

Alexandria was another important centre of pagan pilgrimage up until the Byzantine period. It has already been mentioned that the city's suburb of Canopus was a focus for pagan temples and religious activity, and it was home to the famous Serapeum temple complex until its fourth-century destruction. A second-century AD letter from Karanis in Egypt includes a request for a "Marseilles

[531] Arnush (2005) 97-98.
[532] See the first- to second-century bronze statuette in the British Museum, no. 1909,0620.2. Miniature silver models of the temple were also produced for visitors, as described by St Paul in *Acts* 19:24-27. Casson states that these silver shrines were purchased alongside cheaper terracotta versions, to be given as votive gifts to Artemis in the temple itself. He does not give a source for this information. Casson (1974) 287. Given the popularity of the temple and the distribution of other souvenirs from this site, it seems likely that such shrines could also have been purchased as souvenirs.
[533] Elsner (2007) 237.
[534] Elsner (2007) 240.
[535] Favro (2006) 21.

flask" to be purchased in Alexandria on the writer's behalf, in order to give thanks to the god Serapis.[536] It seems that the Marseilles flask was to be left as an offering at the Serapeum, perhaps during a pilgrimage there. As an object it also prefigures later Christian pilgrim flasks, which became standardised souvenirs (something which is discussed more below).

The importance of Canopus lasted into Late Antiquity, attracting pagan pilgrims into the fifth century AD, and witnessing the performance of rituals such as incubation, where the faithful would sleep within the temple in order to receive a miracle (something we are familiar with from Christian pilgrimage).[537] Incubation by pilgrims was also witnessed elsewhere in the pagan world, such as at the large Asklepieion, or the Temple of Asclepius complex, at Pergamon where the building for incubation was repeatedly enlarged to provide room for the increasing numbers of visiting pilgrims.[538] Alongside pagan travellers, Jewish pilgrims were also well known throughout the antique period as they visited holy sites. Of particular importance was Jerusalem, which became a focus for this activity, as the Torah dictated that the city must be visited at least three times a year.[539] Objects such as jars with Jewish symbols were sold to pilgrims and manufactured in the same workshops as those that made similar Christian souvenirs (fig. 52).[540]

III.1. Christian pilgrim souvenirs

The objects that are identified as Christian pilgrim souvenirs can take a variety of forms, and have multiple layers of meaning. Not only do they function as mementoes of the travels of their owners, provoking memories associated with that experience through their material form, but they are also often in the form of samples of the religious sites from which they originate. This also provides the objects with a religious level of significance, as they are effectively portable pieces of holy locations. They can also feature decoration pertaining to the holy site or figure they commemorate, and as such can be viewed as objects of veneration, similar to icons, thanks to the power afforded to religious images in the early Christian period.

[536] P.Mich.8.501/5638. The Marseilles flask is a reference to a container of wine from Marseilles (described in the letter as a λαγύνους Μασσαλιτανας), representing an earlier example of regional produce like those discussed above.
[537] Haas (1997) 327.
[538] Hoffman (1998) 54.
[539] Exodus, 23:17. Josephus, *AJ* 4.203; trans. Thackeray (1961).
[540] Compare with the Christian mould-blown jug in fig. 57 to see similarities in style.

Late antique pilgrim souvenirs can generally be divided into two main types, and the structure of the remainder of this chapter reflects this. The first type are relics, including neutral substances that through physical contact have been sanctified and function as secondary relics. The second type of pilgrim souvenir discussed here are vessels and containers, in particular ones that are intended to transport or store the aforementioned neutral substances.

III.1.i. Relics

Relics were the ultimate souvenir from religious sites for the late antique pilgrim. As objects, their importance comes from their role in making the holy manifest, and they attest to the historical truth of the scriptures. The most well-known kind is the bodily relic - a part of the body of a holy person - however these were prestigious and relatively rare. Objects associated with a sacred narrative or person were also considered relics, such as the baskets which had been used to hold the loaves and fishes at the feeding of the 5000, which were buried beneath Constantine's Column in the Forum of Constantine.[541] One other specific example is wood from the True Cross, on which Christ had been crucified. The mother of Emperor Constantine, Helena, travelled extensively with the specific aim of locating and collecting the objects associated with the life of Jesus; the most notable of these was the True Cross. Fragments of wood from this relic were then distributed far and wide, becoming highly sought after objects.

The way that these relics function is in part based upon their fragmentary state. They are metonymic and represent the original complete whole. For example, a splinter of the True Cross – a popular relic in Late Antiquity – represents through its materiality the complete cross on which Jesus was crucified. This is described by St Jerome in his letter to Eustochium, where he describes the behaviour of Paula as she venerates the wood in Jerusalem: "Before the Cross she threw herself down in adoration as though she beheld the Lord hanging upon it".[542] That people desired such objects as souvenirs of their trip is witnessed by the description Egeria gives of another pilgrim

[541] James (2001) 128.
[542] Jerome, *Ep.* 108.9; trans. Fremantle (1893).

who, when venerating the True Cross in Jerusalem, bit a piece off in order to keep some for themselves.[543] This is an extreme example but does serve to testify as to the desirability of the fragmentary relics. Such tiny pieces were often stored in jewellery settings to ensure that they were constantly in close contact with the body of their faithful owner. Gregory of Nyssa, in his testimony of the Life of St Macrina, describes how after the saint's death, they found her to be wearing an iron ring which featured a compartment containing a particle of wood from the True Cross, which was hung around her neck so to be constantly in contact with her heart.[544]

However, as Hunt cautions, the urge to own a piece of the cross and other similar relics was more than simply desiring a souvenir commemorating the visit; relics originating from the Holy Land were treasured possessions because they had the power to stimulate the same reactions which the holy places themselves aroused.[545] This metonymic function allowed a fragment to behave as the original complete site or object, and also provided pilgrims with the opportunity of possessing the sacred. Therefore to own a pilgrim souvenir was to own an object that was more than a material memento of a trip – although these objects could and no doubt did function in this way. They were samples of the places visited by the pilgrim, but also of past events, beyond the pilgrim's individual experience. They were material mementoes of the lives of the Holy figures with which they were associated, and authenticated the scriptural stories through their physical presence. As seen in Jerome's description of Paula above, the pilgrim did not need to have experienced the Biblical stories first hand for the relic objects to provoke memories of it.

The kinds of relic so far discussed were prestigious objects, and not available as souvenirs to the majority of pilgrims. Instead, there is another form that pushes the concept of souvenir 'samples' further. Souvenirs were also made from intrinsically worthless, neutral substances such as oil, water, or soil; these were cheap and ubiquitous materials, and very little skill was needed in production. The basis for these kinds of pilgrim souvenirs is the late antique concept that divine

[543] Egeria 37.2; trans. Wilkinson (1999).
[544] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* 64-65; trans. Corrigan (2005).
[545] Hunt (1982) 129.

power is transferable through physical contact.[546] John of Damascus emphasises the role of physical contact through his description of why the True Cross is considered sacred:

> So, then, this same truly precious and august tree, on which Christ has offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sakes, is to be worshipped as sanctified by contact with His holy body and blood[547]

A neutral substance, such as earth, oil or water, can become blessed through contact with a holy place, person or object. As a souvenir, the object's materiality stores this sanctity and makes it portable, meaning that pilgrims can take a blessing from the place or person home with them. Examples of these kinds of souvenirs are described within several pilgrim texts.

The anonymous Piacenza Pilgrim in the sixth century describes the creation of one such souvenir for pilgrims who visit Jerusalem to venerate the True Cross, on which Jesus was crucified. He gives a description of oil being offered for blessing, which on contact with the wood of the cross, bubbles up and is sealed in vessels to be taken away by the pilgrims.[548] In addition to oil, earth or soil was used as a material means to convey the holiness of *loca sancta* via souvenirs for pilgrims. Again, the anonymous Piacenza pilgrim describes how at Jerusalem, earth was brought into the tomb of Christ for pilgrims to take away as a blessing, the neutral earth being sanctified through its contact with the holy place.[549] As Vikan explains, the tomb itself was not a building for pilgrims; rather it was seen as a relic to be venerated.[550] In this way, not only are pilgrims taking away a material memento of their visit and a tangible holy blessing, they are also taking with them actual pieces of the Holy Land. This is vividly illustrated by the reliquary box containing stones and soil from the Holy Land (fig. 53) from the Sancta Sanctorum in the Vatican Museums. Inside the box's lid are illustrations of five different scenes from Christian narratives based in the Holy Land; as Vikan explains the images are arranged in order of spiritual hierarchy with the most important at the top.[551] This object shows the journey of a pilgrim in material form, collecting together earth from a series of important sites associated with the Biblical narrative, indicated by the accompanying illustrative decorations that adorn the interior of the reliquary box's lid. However

[546] Vikan (1982) 5.
[547] John of Damascus *Orth. Faith* 4.11; trans. Watson & Pullan (1899).
[548] Piacenza Pilgrim 172.20; trans. Wilkinson (1977).
[549] Piacenza Pilgrim 171.18; trans. Wilkinson (1977).
[550] Vikan (1982) 20.
[551] Vikan (1982) 18-19.

the link between image and objects are only generic. The soils, some of which are labelled, do not all correspond to the locations in which the depicted narratives are set; instead the emphasis is on the causal link between the 'holy' events and the 'Holy' Land.[552] The contents of the box function as material souvenirs of a pilgrimage, whilst the images legitimize the status of the holy souvenirs. Furthermore, the souvenir represents possession of the Holy Land itself, in the form of a material sample of the locations.

Blessings formed of earth also took the shape of coin-like tokens. These objects were baked terracotta - made from the actual soil gathered from holy sites. The British Museum has a number of these from the popular pilgrimage centre of Saint Symeon the Elder at Qal'at Sem'an. Based in Syria the site was formed around the holy man's column, on which he had stood in the fifth century in an act of ascetic faith, attracting visitors from far and wide in the process. These tokens, of which fig. 54 is one such example, were small, portable, and significantly made from the soil on which the column was set. As a Christian ascetic, Symeon the Elder sanctified the ground on which his column stood – again the physical contact ensures that the blessing obtained from the *loca sancta* could be easily transported away by pilgrims to the site. Through these objects the pilgrim is not simply taking away memories of their visit, recorded in the materiality of the souvenir. These were, as Vikan explains, *eulogia* or 'blessings', which formed portable pieces of sanctity that held and conveyed spiritual power to its owner. [553]

Pilgrim tokens were decorated with a variety of imagery, however they often referred directly to the location that the token came from. Fig. 54 shows the Stylite saint standing on top of his column in the desert, reflecting the sight/site pilgrims would have seen, thus legitimising the sanctity of the token itself. Such souvenir objects speak to the memory of the pilgrim by evoking the experience of their visit to the site, as well as their faith through its spiritual value. Georgia Frank states that Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Lands provided the faithful with the opportunity to gaze upon the reality of Biblical scripture through the sight of holy people or holy places; the souvenirs taken

[552] Vikan (1982) 18-19.
[553] Vikan (1982) 13.

from these places represent a concrete expression of this desire to witness the reality of the scriptures.[554]

What is notable about these kinds of pilgrim souvenirs is that they are in a very literal sense the samples of which Stewart speaks. *Eulogiae* made of earth or oil from the *loca sancta* allow visitors to physically take a part of that location home with them. It is more than prompting a memory – it is extending the experience of visiting. This is something emphasised by Elsner, who describes pilgrims as collectors of places through their acquisition of souvenirs. Sanctity, he states, is partly established through the possession of metonymic fragments from holy locations.[555] It was proof not only of the visit, but allowed the experience to be extended indefinitely; as long as they possessed their 'sample' souvenir, they were in contact with the Holy Land.

As well as providing metonymic possession through the acquisition of sacred 'samples', pilgrim souvenirs can also be conceptualised as gifts in a part of a miraculous economy. This is something that Daniel Caner discusses, building on the work of Vincent Déroche.[556] The distribution of *eulogiae* is part of an economy in which the gifts of God are redistributed as charity, an act for which the donor will receive further gifts from God.[557] As such, souvenirs are posited as a pure gift – one that requires no reciprocity.[558] Therefore the objects taken as souvenirs during a pilgrimage not only function as souvenirs, but also as gifts. This is particularly interesting. As such, it seems that souvenir *eulogiae* not only represent the site from which they came, but also the donor, as Mauss and Gregory state in reference to gift theory.[559] Therefore the tokens from the shrine of Saint Symeon at Qal'at Sem'an can also be understood as gifts from the holy man, and an embodiment of his person as a result.

III.1.ii. Souvenir containers

[554] Frank (2000) 11.
[555] Elsner (1997) 117.
[556] Caner (2006); Déroche (1995).
[557] Caner (2006) 333.
[558] Caner (2006) 334.
[559] Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45.

Naturally, many of the kinds of souvenirs above, especially liquids like oil and water, had to be contained in something in order to be safely carried home by pilgrims. The form these containers took depended on what they were to contain and where they originated from, and can be considered as another type of sacred souvenir. Their presence within the archaeological record represents the associated manufacturing businesses that grew up alongside the increasingly popular late antique pilgrim trade. These vessels, whilst fulfilling a practical function in holding a blessed substance, also provided an additional surface on which decoration or inscriptions pertaining to their contents or geographical origins can be placed. As Geary explains, bare relics, especially if indistinct fragments or formless (like oil), do not carry an intrinsic signs of their meaning or importance – external imagery is therefore required to signal the relic's identity and authenticity.[560] As such, these souvenir containers became desirable objects in themselves, and provided another kind of material that pilgrims could take from holy places. Such decoration makes them easy to identify within the archaeological record, however not all containers had decoration; many liquid blessings were stored in undecorated glass bottles, such as those which are kept at Monza alongside the more famous decorated metal *ampullae*.[561]

Ampullae were a kind of flask used to contain liquid *eulogiae* – usually oil or water. These were relatively small in size with two holes bored into the top allowed the vessel to be suspended within a domestic interior or alternatively worn around the neck.[562] Some of the most famous *ampullae* are the mould-made clay ones from the fifth-century pilgrimage centre at Abu Mina, near Alexandria in Egypt, where the shrine of St Menas was located.[563] The site was located approximately one day's journey into the desert from the city of Alexandria, and was formed of a healing shrine which during the fifth and sixth centuries developed into a city, with basilica, baptistery, episcopal offices, baths, and pilgrim hostels.[564] The flasks (fig. 55) are thought to have contained oil sanctified in Abu Mina's Justinianic Tomb Church; Grossman states that the oil was placed in an alabaster vessel located near the church's altar and became consecrated due to the liquid's

[560] Geary (1990) 5.
[561] Vikan (1982) 31.
[562] Anderson (2004) 79
[563] Anderson (2004) 81.
[564] Haas (1997) 38.

proximity with the earth of the holy site.[565] People would then fill vessels with the sacred oil to take home with them. It is likely that holy water was available from the pilgrimage site at Abu Mina as well, as the architectural remains include grand cisterns suggesting it was also a water shrine.[566] The Menas flasks were locally produced souvenirs explicitly made for sale to pilgrims; it fulfilled the visitors' needs for a container to hold their *eulogiae*, as well as providing a material memento commemorating their visit. Excavations at Kom el-Dikka, a late antique neighbourhood of Alexandria, have revealed nearly 150 late sixth-century pilgrim flasks featuring the iconography of Saint Menas; these pilgrim souvenirs suggest that there was a workshop in the vicinity producing these vessels, in addition to those produced outside of Alexandria at Abu Mina itself.[567] Furthermore these flasks were also found within domestic contexts at Kom el-Dikka; in House D flasks were found in the courtyard and the office.[568] This provides us with an insight into the place and function of pilgrim souvenirs after they have left the geographical place of origin. It also demonstrates that pilgrimages did not necessarily have to occur over long distances, but that visits to more local shrines were also popular.

Flasks of various kinds are known from other late antique pilgrimage sites; Anderson discusses the late antique pilgrim *ampullae* found in Asia Minor, describing them as featuring a range of motifs on their surface as decoration, including human figures, animals, crosses, circles, architectural features, and other patterns.[569] They could also be made from materials other than clay. The famous flasks found in the Treasury of the cathedral of San Giovane at Monza and the crypt of the Abbey of Bobbio are made from silver metal in the same general shape as the Menas *ampullae*, and represent important examples of pilgrim souvenirs from the late antique period.[570] Dating to the sixth century, the group of vessels are Palestinian in origin and were intended to contain *eulogiae* oil from a number *loca sancta*, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, recorded by inscriptions referring to the wood of the True Cross and imagery of the tomb (fig. 56).[571] The *ampullae* were made by pouring molten metal into stone moulds, a cheap technique resulting in

[565] Grossman (1998) 285.
[566] Vikan (1982) 16.
[567] Haas (1997) 193-4.
[568] Kiss (1989) 16.
[569] Anderson (2004) 80.
[570] The key publications for these artefacts remain Grabar (1958) and Ainalov (1961).
[571] Grabar (1958) 13.

thin walled objects that could be produced in high numbers.[572] These particular objects also demonstrate that pilgrim souvenirs could have a role outside of the domestic sphere, as the flasks were installed within the two religious establishments by the Lombard Queen Theodolinde, not long after they were produced.[573] As such, they function less as personal mementoes of an individual's journey, but rather they are the souvenirs of a community, giving prestige to the cathedral and allowing the communal memories of the Holy Land's *loca sancta* to be shared in material form.

Souvenir containers are also known in glass, with bottles and jars being used to store pilgrim *eulogiae*. Fig. 57 is a glass mould-blown hexagonal jug dating from the seventh century and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The decoration on the vessel is particularly interesting; it features a cross, which has distinctive steps up to it. This cross is thought to represent the one erected by Emperor Theodosius II in AD 401 or 402 at Golgotha in Jerusalem, to memorialize the site of Jesus' crucifixion.[574] This inclusion of an element of local geography on the souvenir jug echoes the secular souvenirs discussed above which reference their origin through imagery. A similar vessel is fig. 58, dating from the mid fifth to seventh centuries.[575] This also has Christian symbols as decoration, including a pillar featuring a cross on its top. This iconography is strongly reminiscent of that decorating the pilgrim tokens from the shrine of Saint Symeon the Stylite, which was discussed above (fig. 54). Perhaps this vessel too came from Qal'at Sem'an, and was used to contain blessed oil or water.

III.1.iii. Pilgrim souvenirs in the home

The implicit assumption so far has been that these pilgrim souvenir objects were acquired at the holy site and then carried home, where they would be kept within the domestic sphere. However, as we have seen, this is not the only potential trajectory for such objects. The *ampullae* from Jerusalem and now in the Cathedral at Monza were preserved within the altar of the church, as

[572] Grabar (1958) 12.
[573] Grabar (1958) 15. See also the description in Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 4.21; trans. Foulke (1907).
[574] Ratliff & Evans (2012) 92.
[575] Harden (1987) 176.

indicated by a document that records their transference from a box of wood into a box of marble.[576] Even if not visible, their location suggests they had importance and contributed to the building's spiritual prestige, providing the cathedral's congregation with access to the Holy Land.

Eulogiae, as well as being conceived of as souvenirs, were also instruments of practical spiritual power and could be applied to a variety of situations. As discussed above, the material nature of these kinds of objects allowed divine power to be transportable. They therefore had an amuletic function, and became a valuable tool in the spiritual first aid kits of the faithful. As such, there is no guarantee that *eulogiae* acquired on a pilgrimage would have a permanent place within domestic material culture. The pilgrim tokens made of earth from *loca sancta* had a variety of applications attested within textual sources. The *Syriac Life of Symeon* describes how two paralysed youths are brought to Symeon the Elder on his column and ask for healing; Symeon prayed and then instructed dust from his surroundings to be rubbed on their bodies, effecting a healing.[577] A similar story is described in the *Vita* of Saint Symeon the Younger. In it, a monk named Dorotheos uses his pilgrim token to quell a storm he encountered at sea on his return journey from the saint; by crumbling the token on the sea and the boat, the vessel was protected from the raging waters.[578] The blessed oil and water collected by pilgrims could also be used in similar ways. The sixth-century Cyril of Scythopolis described in his Life of St. Euthymius how oil of the True Cross was used to exorcise evil spirits.[579] Therefore *eulogiae* could well be used outside of the home as a practical prophylactic.

The evidence of such use also suggests the role that these souvenirs had within the home too. They often had an amuletic function and were displayed as such to protect the owner's domestic space. In the twenty-second book of *City of God*, Augustine describes the use of soil blessed through contact with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (a process described by the Piacenza Pilgrim – see above). The story relates how Hesperius hung the earth up in his bedroom "to preserve himself from harm"; this successfully purged his home of demons but after Hesperius buries the soil as his

[576] Frisi (1794) 24.
[577] *Syriac Life of Symeon* 34; trans. Doran (1992).
[578] *Life of Symeon the Younger* 235; trans. Van den Ven (1962-70).
[579] Cyril of Scythopolis, 26; ed. Schwarz (1959).

piety made him unwilling to keep it in his bedroom.[580] This gives us an idea of how these kinds of souvenirs were used within the home and where was considered appropriate for display. However, it seems that the disinclination of Hesperius to keep *eulogia* within his bedroom is an idiosyncratic example. In the fifth century, Theodoret describes how he keeps a flask of blessed oil over his bed as protection from demonic attack.[581]

Other kinds of pilgrim souvenirs that featured imagery of the holy place or person from which they originated were also displayed. One example refers to the display of images of Symeon the Elder within the entrances of shops in Rome.[582] Such behaviour is echoed in the excavation of shops at Scythopolis, where four early-sixth century *eulogia* tokens and two *ampullae* were found.[583] Such souvenirs could be displayed within shops for similar amuletic reasons as the evidence of domestic display in the textual sources. Khamis also suggests that the presence of these souvenirs in the archaeological record demonstrates that the shops catered for pilgrims who visited the Round Church on the city's acropolis, and who might have stopped in whilst passing to purchase such merchandise.[584] Therefore the archaeological finds of these souvenirs in the retail context at Scythopolis might actually represent a point of sale rather than permanent display of the objects.

IV. Discussion

IV.1. The creation of late antique souvenirs

The evidence examined within this chapter demonstrates that a range of objects could be souvenirs during the late antique period. By comparing both secular and sacred souvenirs, something not before undertaken in a substantial way, common trends can be identified. It is notable that a large proportion of both sacred and secular souvenirs are made from the materials of terracotta and glass. Not only are these materials plentiful, but their malleability made them ideal for use in the mass production of various objects. For example, the Artemis Ephesia statuette (fig. 51), the Menas ampullae, (fig. 55) and Saint Symeon tokens (fig. 54) are all made from fired clay; furthermore

[580] Augustine, *City of God* 22.8; trans. Dods (1956).
[581] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Hist. rel*. 21.16; trans. Price (2008).
[582] "It is superfluous to speak of Italy, for they say that he became so well-known in the great city of Rome that small portraits of him were set up on a column at the entrances of every shop to bring through that some protection and security to them." Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Life of Symeon* 11; trans. Doran (1992).
[583] Khamis (2007) 451.
[584] Khamis (2007) 453

they are all given their shape using a mould. Similarly the glass pilgrim jugs from Jerusalem (figs 57 and 58), and the statuette of the Antioch Tyche (fig. 37) are all examples of mould blown glass. Even the metal Monza and Bobbio *ampullae* are manufactured using a mould. These techniques allowed the creation of high numbers of near identical objects relatively easily once the initial mould had been produced; that these souvenir objects are largely mould made therefore alludes to their production on a large scale.[585] Such mass manufacturing suggests that there was a high demand for such objects. In terms of mould made pilgrim souvenirs, we can interpret their existence as reflecting high volumes of visitors to the *loca sancta* of Late Antiquity, something reinforced by the evidence provided by pilgrim travelogues and itineraries. Similarly, it seems that pagan or secular sites such as the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus also experienced high volumes of traffic, reflected in the high instances of mould made glass and terracotta statuettes that originated there. By extension, these objects also point to the desire of pilgrims and travellers to purchase objects at such sites.

The method of production also leads into discussions of the value of these objects. Certainly the manufacturing process would have been relatively inexpensive, as repeated mouldings could be done easily without a high level of skill. In terms of the materials used, terracotta was cheap and plentiful, and the finished objects reflect a certain low level of quality. It seems unlikely that such terracotta souvenirs would have been expensive to purchase, and as such would have been accessible to the lowest status travellers seeking souvenirs. Similarly, mould blown glass objects would likely have been reasonably cheap to purchase, as the decoration was created by the mould during the manufacturing process, and therefore would not need to be applied afterwards. However, other glass souvenir objects that feature engraved or otherwise applied decoration likely represent souvenirs aimed at a higher class of customer. The Puteoli-Baiae flasks are not mould made but do however feature standardised wheel cut decoration. All the vessel fragments found to date represent similar style designs featuring topographical city scenes. As such, they represent ready-made souvenirs produced in quantity by their originating workshops. However, a certain

[585] This is likely the reason for the upside down decoration on the sixth- to seventh-century glass pilgrim vessel now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York (99.21.2); the error likely stemmed from the nature of large-scale manufacture in the workshop production. See also Vikan (1982) 34 for a similar error on a St Symeon pilgrim token.

level of skill would be required in planning and executing the decoration on the vessel's surface. Similarly, the gold glass vessel from Acerentia represents a higher level of quality than mould blown glass objects - but also the method of manufacture and the numbers of extant vessel bases surviving to us today suggest a reasonably large scale workshop production, as discussed in chapter 4. A review of these objects suggests that there was more variety in the quality of the souvenirs available to pilgrims than was offered to secular leisure travellers. This view is reinforced by the presence of the silver dish from Otañes and the glass Pharos bottle, as they are both high quality secular souvenirs. It can, therefore, be argued that in light of this evidence pilgrims were from more diverse backgrounds than those travelling purely for leisure, who seem to be individuals of reasonable status and economic means.

The large-scale production of souvenirs relies upon the repeated use of standardised form or iconography which allows the objects to directly correspond to Stewart's description of souvenirs of external sights – namely objects that convey a location through their form or decoration.[586] However the other kind of souvenirs Stewart discusses, namely 'samples' of material culture from another place, are also found within these systems of mass production described above. For example, the pilgrim tokens made from terracotta are samples inasmuch as they are formed from the actual earth of *loca sancta*. However, this raw material is then formed using a mould into large numbers of decorated terracotta tokens. The manufacturing process gives a recognisable form to the abstract material of earth, allowing the 'sample' to be placed into a coherent frame of reference and meaning. The decoration on the Sancta Sanctorum box (fig. 53) functions in the same way. As such they can be interpreted as souvenirs of external sights, as they refer to their place of origin explicitly through their decoration (for example through the depiction of the column on the token from the Shrine of Saint Symeon, in fig. 54) or inscription (the labels on the samples in the Sancta Sanctorum box) and were thus purposefully transformed into souvenirs.[587] Similarly, the placing of earth into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as described by the Piacenza Pilgrim, in order for it to become *eulogiae*, can also be interpreted as a manufacturing technique.[588] The movement of earth is a purposeful act that transforms the substance, turning it into something that can be taken by

[586] Stewart (1993) 138. See also chapter 2, section III.2.
[587] Stewart (1993) 138.
[588] Piacenza Pilgrim 171.18; trans. Wilkinson (1977).

visitors to the site. As such these mass produced objects are effectively purpose made mementoes, made available in large numbers to a wide range of people who wished to take home an object that is biographically associated with their visit to a specific place.

A feature of souvenirs produced on a large scale is the level of homogenisation present in the appearance of the objects. Objects made from the same mould will look similar to each other. Furthermore, the use of similar schemes of decoration, such as on the Puteoli - Baiae flasks, creates a discrete set of objects that all resemble each other. As such these are objects which lack singularisation in terms of their appearance and origin, yet are acquired by visitors to reflect their own individual experiences. It can however be argued that the homogeneity of these objects is where their desirability is in part derived. By looking alike, these objects convey a sense of authenticity, guaranteeing to potential owners that the souvenir did indeed come from a particular site. As such, the standardised souvenir becomes a distinctive product of that location and is recognisably associated with visits there. Even if souvenirs were not specifically manufactured at the site itself, such as the Menas ampullae thought to have been made in Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria rather than the shrine at Abu Mina, the standardised design allows them to be considered authentic products associated with that site. In addition, the clay from which those flasks are made may reinforce this sense of authenticity. As discussed above, this material was cheap and therefore often used for lower status objects, especially in terms of pilgrim souvenirs. However, the material's common usage for these kinds of objects may also reflect the creation of a manufacturing tradition for pilgrim objects – clay was used precisely *because* it was a material associated with pilgrim souvenirs. Furthermore, the intrinsic qualities of clay associated it with the land and place of origin, something emphasised and exaggerated via the making of pilgrim tokens. Therefore this could be argued to be an important part of the identity of certain pilgrim objects, and a material sign of the authenticity of their role as souvenirs.

The standardisation of souvenir objects in this period can also reflect the standardisation of the travelling experience. The acquisition of a readymade object associated with a specific location can become an integral part of the experience and an expected behaviour of visitors. This seems

especially true of pilgrims, whose collection of souvenirs in the form of *eulogiae* became an important component of the pilgrim experience. Certainly the Piacenza pilgrim records the receiving of blessings throughout his journey, such as the naturally occurring "rock oil" he takes whilst travelling through Egypt.[589] Such examples emphasise the close association between the act of visiting a place and the specific souvenirs that can be acquired there, meaning that in fact all souvenir objects can be considered as samples. They are authentic representations of the material culture of a specific place that has been incorporated into the particular culture of that location, even if only on a very local scale.

IV.2. Objects of display

The inclusion of decoration on souvenir objects underlines the fact that on one level these items functioned as objects of display. They are material signs of travels that have been undertaken or events that have been attended by their owner.[590] In order to convey this meaning to viewers, souvenir objects are reliant upon being recognisable as originating from certain places or events. This is possible through the use of imagery, form, and inscriptions that relate to their place of origin, as well as a reliance on standardised forms of appearance, as discussed above. Souvenirs made from samples of foreign material culture, however, can be more difficult for others to identify. Often, if not placed into a structure of meaning through the use of specific iconography (as seen with pilgrim tokens) the meaning of such souvenirs remains highly personal and invisible to others.

However, certain souvenir objects are recognisable through their contrast with examples of local material culture – that is they are notable for their visible 'exoticism'. Such items include produce linked with a specific region or location, such as the textiles of Skinepeous or the mysterious *albandicum*.[591] As Stewart discusses, exotic souvenirs are proof of the survival of the owner outside of his or her context of familiarity.[592] Therefore to own an exotic souvenir is not only to prove that a foreign place has been visited, but also that the place visited was so drastically

[589] Piacenza Pilgrim 188.42; trans. Wilkinson (1977).
[590] See chapter 2, section III.2.
[591] P.Princ.2.82; P.Col.7.188.
[592] Stewart (1993) 148.

different to the home context that the souvenir object represents survival in an alien environment. With such an association comes prestige. Stewart continues that the unfamiliarity of such exotic objects leads to a subsequent difficulty in interpretation of the objects, turning the owner of the souvenir into as much of a curiosity as the object itself.[593] As such, the display of souvenir objects within the home places them and the owner into a narrative of travel and relates directly to their experiences; the objects function to incorporate the travel experience into the owner's identity in material form.[594]

Souvenirs associated with events, such as the glass vessels featuring scenes of chariot racing or the contorniates commemorating events in the hippodrome, also reflect the identity of the owner and help to construct a narrative. Not only do they confirm attendance at these events but also reflect information about the interests and allegiances of their owner. As such they too reflect the identity of the owner and how they wish to be seen. A notable example of this is the gold glass vessel base featuring the colour red, thus associating the depicted charioteer with the circus factions (fig. 46), which were an important part of social identities of supporters.[595] The same is also true for other objects, such as the silver plate from Otañes featuring spa activities, and the flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, which were popular and fashionable resorts. Such souvenirs again reflect information about their owner and the facets of their identity that they wished to communicate to others. By extension this can also be applied to sacred souvenirs. If pilgrim souvenirs were displayed within the home, as is recorded by Augustine and Theodoret, then the belief system of the owner is prominently displayed to all.[596] Furthermore, these would likely have been recognisable souvenir objects and therefore not require specific knowledge to identify. Their overt imagery – such as the stylite saint on his column (figs 54 and 58), or the typical shape of *ampullae* seen in the Menas and Monza-Bobbio flasks – ensured they could be understood as pilgrim objects. These souvenirs specifically denoted travel and pilgrimage, reflecting the dedication of the owner in travelling to these sites in person. As such they represent their owners' symbolic membership of people who had conducted pilgrimage; these objects could become badges of honour, distinguishing the owner from others, in

[593] Stewart (1993) 148.
[594] Wallendorf & Arnould (1988) 531. See also discussion in chapter 2, section III.2.
[595] Al. Cameron (1976) especially chapter 4.
[596] Augustine, *City of God* 22.8; trans. Dods (1956). Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Hist. rel*., 21.16; trans. Price (2008).

much the same way as exotic souvenirs function. They also represented a level of piety beyond purely faith, which would be determined by the presence of other more general religious objects within the home, such as icons or religious texts. For other faiths, in particular Judaism, the display of such pilgrim souvenirs would be further significant as it also demonstrated a correct adherence to fulfilling religious doctrine; in the Torah pilgrimages to Jerusalem were mandatory.[597] Therefore, their faith, piety and obedience would be communicated through the display of souvenirs, such as the glass flask in fig. 52.

IV.3. Personal mementoes

As the theoretical chapter has outlined, souvenir objects have meaning as they allow a place or event to be memorialised and revisited through their materiality, an association that is itself reliant upon the intersection between the object's biography and that of the owner.[598] That this was acknowledged within the late antique period is underlined by John Chrysostom's statement that when looked at, an object can evoke memories of the moment of acquisition.[599] Therefore when Theophanes looks at the water jug in the form of Silenus, he will likely be reminded of his visit to Tyre and the context of the object's acquisition.[600] As such, souvenirs are personal mementoes and meaningful objects. However, souvenirs do not necessarily have to be individual and stand-alone objects as seen in the example above. Many trips in the late antique period, such as that undertaken by Theophanes or long-distance pilgrimages, see the traveller visiting many places en route to their final destination. As such, they had plenty of opportunity to acquire a series of souvenir objects as they went. For example, whilst only in Egypt, the Piacenza Pilgrim obtained rock oil as *eulogia*, some peppercorns he picked off a tree, and was given some green nuts that originated in India.[601] This is in addition to the more conventional pilgrim souvenirs obtained elsewhere on his journey. In examples such as this, both secular and sacred souvenirs are combined to create a representation of his journey in material form. As such, the material that the pilgrim collects can be considered to form a collection of souvenirs rather than one memento of a specific place. This series of objects reflects the complete journey and a unique experience. In this way, a single souvenir can represent

[597] Exodus, 23:17. Josephus, *AJ* 4.203; trans. Thackeray (1961).
[598] Chapter 2, section III.2.
[599] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*, 6.16; trans. Stephens (1889).
[600] P.Ryl.630.
[601] Piacenza Pilgrim, 41-42; trans. Wilkinson (1977).

a personal memento of one place, however a collection of such objects represents the total experience of a trip.

As well as evoking moments from the biography of the owner, souvenirs could also be personal objects that referred to more communal realms of experience. As Hunt explains using the testimony of Egeria as an illustration, the motivations of the majority of pilgrims to undertake visits to the Holy Land and other sacred locations came from a desire to understand the narrative provided in the Bible and to view first hand the places described within it.[602] Visiting the sites provided an authentic physical context for the reading of the text.[603] Their desire to travel corresponded not only to their own beliefs and experiences, but also to a worldview that they shared with other Christian devotees. Therefore the accumulation of material souvenirs from these pilgrimages, especially to places associated with Biblical narrative, lent a further level of authenticity in material form – not only did souvenirs function as reminders of the trips their owners had taken, they also were the material embodiment of the Biblical narrative and a sign of the veracity of the Christian scriptures. The meaning that such objects had was deeply personal but also one that could be understood and shared by others. In this sense, pilgrim souvenirs are both personal and collective mementoes, and reflect a conflation of personal and public narratives.

As an extension of this, souvenirs can also be owned and displayed in a correspondingly communal setting. It was mentioned earlier that the *ampullae* at the Cathedral of Monza were incorporated into the altar in a marble box.[604] As such, they were curated within a building which the wider public had access to. Therefore the meaning of these flasks would have been accessible to all who venerated them. Furthermore, such public display and quasi-communal ownership made available the experience and meaning of pilgrimage to those who did not undertake the journey first hand. Benson explains in reference to readymade souvenirs from Rome that such objects do not represent interior and personal memories but rather outward and collective ones, available to those who have never visited the site in question.[605] In terms of the pilgrim flasks of Monza, this allowed the

[602] Hunt (1982) 88.
[603] Hunt (1982) 88.
[604] Frisi (1794) 24.
[605] Benson (2004) 16.

personal experience of pilgrimage to become a communal one. The relationship between communal and personal experiences can also be identified within secular evidence. Many of the images used on mass-produced souvenir or commemorative objects use generic imagery, for example the images of couples used on marriage jewellery. In such cases, the objects rely upon a communal understanding of the objects' meaning, which could then be re-appropriated and invested with personal meaning by the owner.

IV.4. Trajectories of Souvenirs

The evidence has shown that souvenirs, both sacred and secular, had a variety of biographical trajectories that they could travel along once they had been acquired. It is certainly clear that not all souvenir objects would have been taken home; as described above, the Monza-Bobbio pilgrim *ampullae* were placed within churches, giving them a quasi-communal sense of ownership. Regional specialities such as food, drink and other consumables would likely be used up, meaning that their material presence in the lives of their owners was transitory. Similarly, religious souvenirs considered to have a prophylactic nature, such as flasks of blessed oil and water, could also be consumed over a period of time. This amuletic function also ensured their display in other non-domestic contexts, such as commercial spaces like shops.

These post-acquisition trajectories for souvenirs are balanced by the confirmed place of other examples within the domestic realm. The findspots of the statuettes of Artemis Ephesia across Asia Minor suggest that the objects were taken home by visitors to the temple.[606] Similarly, the movement of the Pharos bottle from a workshop in Alexandria to modern-day Serbia, and the range of locations for the Puteoli – Baiae flasks might represent the same.[607] However, once within the home, in what context were these objects kept? Pagan souvenirs are likely to have been kept in the household shrine and used within rituals of domestic worship. Certainly, the miniature statuettes such as those of Artemis Ephesia are not dissimilar to the size and subject matter of the heirloom statuettes discussed in relation to domestic shrines in chapter 3 of this thesis. Textual sources also

[606] Elsner (2007) 240, after Fleischer (1973) 27-34.
[607] The sites these flask fragments were found at include Rome, Ostia, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia, Cologne, and York: Painter (1975) 54-60. This is of course only one interpretation of the find spots; they might also represent subsequent movement later in their biography, or be the result of the exporting of vessels via trade.

tell us that Christian souvenirs were taken home and kept within domestic space – something reinforced by the finds of Menas ampullae in a house in Kom el-Dikka.[608] Specifically, Augustine tell us that souvenirs with amuletic properties could be kept within private locations such as the bedroom.[609] However the ownership of Christian souvenirs and their curation within the home could also represent a movement from pagan household shrines to Christian ones. Kimberley Bowes' work on domestic religion and worship during Late Antiquity highlights how in the late-fourth century, private shrines containing relics became popular in the homes of aristocratic families in Rome.[610] Since many souvenirs from Christian *loca sancta* are secondary relics, it is reasonable to consider them suitable for inclusion in such areas of domestic Christian worship. They would also provide objects of veneration for poorer status families for whom the more prestigious relics displayed in the shrines of aristocratic homes were beyond their means. Judith Herrin also suggests that earlier pagan household shrines evolved into spaces of Christian worship through the domestic display of painted Christian images, eventually developing into the 'icon corner' seen in Byzantine and even modern orthodox homes.[611] Again, it seems highly likely that pilgrim souvenirs could be displayed in such a context for veneration; furthermore much of the imagery used on such objects (such as the frontal pose of St Menas on the ampulla in fig. 55) are similar to the styles of more typical icons of the later Byzantine period. Considered in this light, souvenir objects from pilgrimages had an important place the rituals of domestic Christian worship. Their presence within the home represents a continuation of traditions from the pagan into Christian period, and their role in the evolution of worship in domestic contexts.

So far, secular souvenirs have only been discussed in reference to their role within the home as objects predominantly of memory and display. However, could they have more practical applications within a domestic setting, like the Christian souvenirs discussed above? The majority of the secular souvenirs are objects that have intrinsic practical functions – the flasks, bottles, and dishes are all receptacles used to contain food, drink, or other substances. Certainly, the Poetovio jug's handle suggests that it held liquid contents that could be poured out, perhaps within a dining

[608] Kiss (1989) 16.
[609] Augustine, *City of God* 22.8; trans. Dods (1956).
[610] Bowes (2008) 87-92. One of the examples she gives is of a shrine located in a stairway of a residence that once stood on the site of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo on the Caelian Hill, Rome. See Krautheimer (1937) vol.1.
[611] Herrin (2013) 281-301.

context. Similarly, the iconography of the Puteoli-Baiae flasks suggest also a liquid contents, although their constricted neck might represent a toilet or medicinal context rather than use for dining, as it facilitates the rationing of precious liquids. For this reason it seems likely that the Otañes plate too was associated more with a toilet ritual context than dining within the home. This would allow the continuation of behaviours exhibited during visits to spa resorts whilst at home, activities reinforced by their representation on the object itself. Furthermore, the materiality of these souvenirs creates an extension of the actual experience of the owners through the intended functions of the objects. This contrasts with the Christian examples. The Menas and Monza *ampullae*, feature no constrictions on the neck – instead Grabar suggests the necks of the Monza flasks were once sealed with wax.[612] However this absence of design feature might represent their crudeness in terms of form and manufacture rather than a different purpose. Furthermore, the Monza *ampullae*, like other examples, were likely worn around the owner's neck where they had an amuletic function, their sacred contents protecting the wearer.[613] However the use of the Puteoli-Baiae flasks represent a practical application in terms of medicinal and restorative value. Thus after their contents were used, they likely became predominantly mementoes of the trip undertaken by their owner. Alternatively, they could have been reused for other precious liquids.

Such an analysis demonstrates that both secular and sacred souvenirs could have active roles within domestic space. Rather than being only passive objects of display, or receptacles for memories, these objects physically interacted with their owners, becoming integral parts of the material culture of the late antique home. Within scholarship, Christian pilgrim souvenirs are often examined as a closed group, and isolated from other evidence for souvenirs in a more broadly secular context. By comparing both religious and non-religious souvenir objects, it becomes clear that the creation and acquisition of Christian souvenirs is part of wider and well-established behaviours relating to the material culture of travel. Furthermore, it highlights the important role of secular souvenir material during this period, which is usually overshadowed or ignored within studies. As such, the collecting of objects from specific locations and events can be understood as not exclusively religious behaviour, as is often assumed.

[612] Grabar (1958) 11.
[613] Ainalov (1961) 226.

CHAPTER 6:

BASKETS IN LATE ANTIQUITY – CASE STUDY OF AN ARTEFACT TYPE

I. INTRODUCTION

This fourth thematic chapter takes the form of a case study, focused upon one artefact type – the basket. Baskets are present in archaeological, textual, and visual sources from Late Antiquity, and can be considered as a common example of material culture from this period. By applying the theoretical considerations explored in the previous chapters to one specific artefact type, this section seeks to reveal the role baskets had as meaningful objects within late antique society. Furthermore, it is hoped that such a process will draw out further themes and trends relating to the personal meaning of objects.

However, before baskets can be discussed in terms of meaningful domestic objects, an overview is required of the available primary evidence and contemporary scholarship to understand why this object type is suitable for a case study of this kind. Firstly, the term basket needs to be briefly defined to outline the scope of this chapter. Baskets are containers that have been woven out of fibres or strips of material without the use of a loom or any kind of frame – this is what distinguishes basketry from other woven materials such as textiles.[614] Basketry as a material was used to create a range of objects beyond 'baskets'—basketry wrapping was used to cover and protect glass (fig. 59), and woven domestic furnishings such as mats have also been found in the archaeological record (fig. 60). However such items will not be studied here; the focus will remain on baskets as stand-alone vessels or containers to form a discrete object type.

I.1. Evidence

Baskets are most commonly made out of natural plant fibres, which decompose quickly when in the ground meaning that they struggle to survive within the archaeological record. However, there are examples from the late antique period that have survived to the present day. Specific conditions are required for their preservation; both dry, arid conditions and wet, anaerobic environments allow the natural fibres of basketwork objects to survive and avoid the normal process of decay. As a

[614] Adovasio (2010) 1.

result, the finds of basketry are normally restricted to specific regions of the late antique world. The dry desert landscapes of North Africa and the Near East provide the majority of extant examples of baskets from the late antique period. For example, basketwork has been amongst the finds from Qasr Ibrim in Upper Egypt (fig. 61), and at Berenike, a Roman trading port on the Red Sea coast.[615] Basketwork has also been found in the wetter Northern regions of Europe; for example a late Roman willow twined basket was found in waterlogged conditions at Marcham in Oxfordshire (fig. 62).[616] There are also other very specific conditions that provide surviving examples. Cullin Mingaud's study of basketry from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Oplontis, whilst strictly predating the late antique period, demonstrates that carbonisation through burning can allow basketwork to survive in the archaeological record.[617] Furthermore, the deposition of volcanic ash during the eruption of Vesuvius has created voids from the destruction of basketry objects, which allow casts to be taken to reveal the form of the original objects.[618] The result of these patterns of survival is that there are large absences of evidence for many regions. However, Willeke Wendrich, who has extensively studied Egyptian basketry, states that baskets were likely as ubiquitous as pottery and therefore used in similar numbers, something often overlooked due to their poor survival in comparison to pottery within the archaeological record.[619] With this in mind, we can reasonably accept that baskets were found across all regions within the late antique period, much as they are in modern times.

Where there are absences within the archaeological record, other sources of information help to fill in these voids. Visual sources provide a wealth of information on baskets, especially in regions where no basketwork has been found in the archaeological record. These objects are easy to recognise within a wide variety of scenes and media, underlining the ubiquity of their presence within late antique society. They are included in decorative schemes on various kinds of domestic objects; see for example the ivory pyxis decorated with the martyrdom of Saint Menas featuring a basket placed on the floor (fig. 63). They appear in the decoration of domestic furnishings such as

[615] Wendrich (1998) 253-264.
[616] Excavated during Oxford University's Vale & Ridgeway project. See Kamash *et al.* (2010) for the interim report.
[617] Cullin-Mingaud (2010) 72.
[618] Cullin-Mingaud (2010) fig. 86-87.
[619] Wendrich (1999) 1.

wall hangings (fig. 64), and in the public sphere are found in depictions such as the designs of church mosaics (fig. 65).

Textual sources also reveal the role these objects had in daily life. Baskets are included in Ausonius' description of the marriage feast in his *epithalamium* poem: "Servants bring water for their hands, load in baskets the gifts of hard-won Ceres".[620] Papyrological sources are also valuable, especially documentary texts. In letters, inventories, and accounts, baskets of various kinds are regularly mentioned as stand alone examples of material culture, or as containers for other objects of note. For example, a fourth-century private letter from Egypt records the dispatch of "a basket of parsley roots, a basket of wheat sacks and a basket of some small raisins" to a member of a monastic settlement.[621] Another letter of the same date describes the objects a husband sends to his wife as, "two bed spreads, two pounds of purple dye, six baskets, and two towels".[622]

I.2. Scholarship

The evidence suggests that these objects should be considered as an important part of the everyday material culture of late antique life. However, traditional scholarship published on domestic objects – for example catalogues of artefacts or archaeological reports – tend to show baskets as essentially utilitarian in nature. Winlock and Crum's 1926 report of the excavations of the sixth-century Monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes, Egypt includes objects of basketwork and describes it thus:

> They were usually large – 50-55 cm. in diameter at the top and 30-40 cm. deep – and very well woven. The body of the basket was of palm leaf plaited on palm-fiber cord, with rope handles of the latter material woven through from the edges to the bottom. An old, well-worn basket from Room 10 had its bottom broken out and was then crudely patched with palm rope and leather, just as they are patched today. These baskets differ in no wise from modern ones, and since the materials are all local there is no reason to suppose that they are other than a very old native product.[623]

This statement is to a certain extent true; in terms of physical form baskets have not changed a great deal. Wendrich says herself that in Egypt there is great continuity in terms of basketry traditions, with similarities in style existing between baskets of the past and modern day from the

[620] Ausonius, *Cent. Nupt.* 17.2; trans. Evelyn White (1919).
[621] P.Ben.Mus.4.
[622] SB 14.12080; trans. Youtie (1976).
[623] Winlock (1926) vol. 1, 67.

same region.[624] However Winlock and Crum's description is also representative of the way in which these objects are discussed within the majority of scholarship. Focus remains on their construction techniques and physical descriptions. Within this sphere are however some useful texts: White's study of Roman farm equipment has a section on baskets based on iconographic and literary sources, and Gaitzsch collates archaeological examples from the Roman world.[625] Happily, several studies have also been published in recent years devoted entirely to basketry from the Roman period – French scholars have been leading this field with work on the basketry of the Roman West and North Africa by Magali Cullin-Mingaud, Nicole Blanc, Françoise Gury, and Guy Barbier.[626] There is also the work of Willeke Wendrich, mentioned above, who has produced two texts that cover the practical complexities of investigating the archaeological remains of basketry, with a focus on Egypt.[627] However there is nonetheless a general absence when it comes to further analysis of the role these objects held in everyday life. As such, these are objects represented as vessels in which only their contents carry significance; they are otherwise neutral, created only for utility, and unchanging over time.

This chapter seeks to remedy the previous focus on the utilitarian aspects of baskets by applying the same theoretical arguments and approaches in the earlier three chapters to this rather neglected field of evidence. It seems unlikely given their prominent position within everyday life that there is not the potential for a greater meaning in certain contexts, both domestic and beyond.

II. Baskets as Meaningful Objects

The discussions in this study so far have demonstrated that any object has the potential for sentimental meaning and value, because of the nature of material culture and its ability to accumulate memories. This capacity is not specific to a certain class of object – all examples of material culture have this potential. Therefore, baskets could of course be objects of sentimental value in Late Antiquity. Private letters from late antique Egypt extensively refer to the sending and receiving of goods as gifts and favours between friends and family. This often includes items of

[624] Wendrich (1999) 3.
[625] White (1975); Gaitzsch (1986).
[626] Mingaud (1992); Blanc & Gury (1990); Barbier, *et al* (1999).
[627] Wendrich (1991); Wendrich (1999).

basketry, as seen in the fourth-century letters quoted above.[628] The biography of these objects – their origin with a close friend or family member – can lead to the creation of sentimental value. Certainly, as discussions in the previous chapters have explored, baskets given by another can become material evocations of their donor and the context of the act of giving.[629] Similarly baskets might well be included in the objects bequeathed and inherited by the lower classes of late antique society, as occurred with the other more ordinary objects recorded in the documentary papyri, and explored in chapter 3. However, much of this is speculation, and does not apply specifically to evidence from this period. Therefore, this section will now look at specific indications of baskets as meaningful objects. Certainly the evidence suggests that baskets had definite cultural meanings beyond their functional use.

II.1. Baskets and late antique femininity

An overview of available evidence suggests a link between baskets and the late antique notion of femininity. We know that a certain type of basket, the *kalathos*, was associated with women through its traditional use as a wool basket, in which women would keep the wool they worked when spinning. It has already been mentioned in chapter 4's discussion of handmade gifts that there was a strong cultural link between the 'virtuous' women and the activities of spinning and weaving. During the late antique period, the basket would have been considered a part of the material culture associated with this pursuit. Historically, baskets and weaving are linked in the work of Virgil, in which he describes "Minerva's basket" when contrasting the dutiful woman working wool with the warrior Camilla.[630] Furthermore, wool baskets also traditionally had a role within the Roman marriage ceremony. Festus states the ceremony featured a cry of *talassio* in reference to the original Roman wedding when Romulus and his men abducted the Sabine women; *talassio* in this context also referred to a wool working basket like the *kalathos* mentioned above.[631]

Returning to the late antique period, John Chrysostom further underlines the association between women and wool-working equipment, by stating its presence to be the sure sign of a woman's

[628] SB 14.12080; P.Ben.Mus.4.
[629] Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45. See also discussion in chapter 2, section III.3.i, and chapter 4, section III.2.
[630] Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.805-7; trans. Fairclough (1918).
[631] Festus 18; trans. Savagner (1846).

occupation of a house.[632] Visual sources also emphasise this link between women and wool baskets – as seen in the second-century grave stela in fig. 66, which features a basket and other wool working equipment alongside their female owner. The consequence is that in the context of spinning and wool working, the basket is designated as a culturally female object. This is nowhere clearer than in images of the story of the Annunciation, the moment at which the Virgin Mary is told whilst spinning that she is to give birth to the Son of God, which are common in the late antique period. Fig. 67 is an early Christian resist dye cloth decorated with this scene and recovered from a Christian burial. The Virgin, identifiable through the inscription MAPIA, is seen seated next to a large basket, into which the spun wool is deposited. Mary is presented as the ideal of womanhood, a concept reinforced by the activity of spinning, which is itself communicated through the inclusion of the basket in the scene. Other depictions of this story also feature the wool-working basket. Fig. 68 depicts a large gold pendant necklace from around AD 600, decorated with the Annunciation scene. The basket is again used as an iconographic device to represent the full material culture of the most suitable of feminine pursuits, spinning. That this is a stock image, used time and again to represent the story of the Annunciation, encourages the view that the basket symbolises the virtuous woman of Late Antiquity. Even in the simplest representations, the basket is always included – fig. 69 shows a sixth- to seventh-century pilgrim token from Qal'at Sem'an in Syria; it is a relatively small and crude object, but still the basket is depicted. It testifies to the important cultural values it embodied as a domestic object.

II.2. Baskets as a pagan ritual object

Baskets can also be found in the religious sphere, and evidence suggests that they had roles as ritual objects within late antique pagan cults – specifically those described as 'Mystery' religions. One of these was the Eleusinian Mysteries; its origins are sixth-century BC Eleusis in mainland Greece, but the cult flourished and spread throughout the Mediterranean, surviving into the late antique period.[633] The followers of this cult venerated the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone (also known as Kore), and took part in initiation rituals that were shrouded in secrecy. In documentary sources, the presence of baskets in pagan rituals associated with Demeter can be

[632] John Chrysostom, *Instruction and Refutation Against those men cohabiting with virgins*; trans. Cox Miller (2005).
[633] Burkert (1987) 2.

identified. A third-century letter from Oxyrhynchus addresses a village priestess as "basket-carrier" (described as *kalatephoros* in the text) and requests her attendance at the local shrine to conduct fertility rituals:

> Please go to (the village of) Sinkepha, to the temple of Demeter, to perform the customary sacrifices for our lords the emperors and their victory, for the rise of the Nile and increase of crops, and for favourable conditions of climate.[634]

Helen Saradi describes how popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries continued in late antique Greece, with high profile adherents still being attracted in fourth-century Athens.[635] Even the Emperor Julian – known as the Apostate for instigating a brief imperial return to paganism – visited the holy site of Eleusis in the mid-fourth century to participate in the sacred rites.[636]

It seems that the rituals of this cult involved the procession and use of baskets. Clement of Alexandria describes the verse recited by devotees in first- to second-century Egypt:

> I have fasted;
> I have drunk the cup*;*
> I have taken from the box [*kiste*];
> having done,
> I put it into the basket [*kalathos*],
> and out of the basket into the chest.[637]

The *kalathos* refers to the wool-basket discussed earlier; the *kiste* (or *cista* in Latin) refers to a round-lidded woven basket.[638] The classic iconographic form of the *kiste* is seen in a first- to third-century AD engraved glass paste gem (fig. 70), which shows Triptolemus with a wicker basket and serpent at his feet. Triptolemus was the fabled originator of the mystery cult to Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, and was himself the subject of veneration by followers.[639] Other depictions of the Eleusinian Mysteries and their rites also show the *kiste* in this form – the second-century AD sarcophagus of Torre Nova (fig. 71) and the late first-century AD Lovatelli Urn both depict the *kiste* in initiation rituals.

[634] P.Oxy. 36.2782; trans. Rowlandson (1998) 62.
[635] Saradi (2011) 266.
[636] Saradi (2011) 281.
[637] Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 2.21; trans. Butterworth (1960).
[638] White (1975) 63-65.
[639] Sidonius Apollinaris *Poems* 9.176; trans. Anderson (1963).

Furthermore the *kiste* can also be identified in association with the Cult of Isis; this religion originated in Egypt but spread along with the syncretic deity Serapis (a combination of the Greek Apis and the Egyptian Osiris) to elsewhere in the Roman Empire. The cult travelled across the Western parts of the Roman Empire, following trade routes from Alexandria to parts of Italy, Dalmatia, Hungary, Spain, France, Germany, Britain and North Africa.[640] Imagery and objects associated with the goddess and her rites are found to these same geographical extents and also depict the *kiste* basket chest in a similar way to that seen in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Fig. 72 is a second- to third-century AD terracotta statuette of Isis nursing Harpocrates, the goddess' son conceived with Osiris; the object depicts the goddess sat cross-legged on a wicker basket. The figurine was probably a votive offering or placed in a wall niche for household worship and protection.[641] The seat on which she rests seems to be the symbolic *kiste*, being recognisably of basketwork and circular in shape. Such iconography is seen in similar perfume bottles now in the Petrie Museum, also showing Isis but dating from the earlier Roman period.[642] It seems that baskets were associated in visual terms with the goddess Isis. The cult of Isis continued into the late antique period; in Egypt, Dijkstra gives an end date for her veneration in the mid-fifth century, based upon epigraphic evidence from Philae.[643]

The traditional association between certain pagan cults and baskets as ritual objects is likely to have been a well-known one considering the survival of these religious activities into the late antique period, especially in regions such as Egypt. The emphasis on a specific form of basket – namely the *kiste* – and its dominant presence within representations of cult figures and rituals means it was identified as an object with cultural and religious meaning.

II.3. Baskets as a symbol of plenty

Looking beyond religious iconography, we see that elsewhere baskets are associated with ideas of agricultural plenty, fertility, and worldly abundance. The image of baskets of fruit and flowers, alongside various creatures and vegetal motifs, is found on a wide variety of domestic furnishings

[640] Turcan (1997) 95-104.
[641] Friedman (1989) 182.
[642] UC47606 & UC47605 are two mould made clay perfume bottles in the form of a nursing Isis seated on a large round woven *kiste*; early Roman Period, Petrie Museum, London.
[643] Dijkstra (2011) 425-30.

and objects. For example, the tapestry fragment from Egypt, seen in fig. 64, was no doubt intended to adorn a domestic interior and shows a basket of flowers as a central motif. A similar design is represented in the fragment of hanging or curtain in fig. 73; also found in Egypt, it depicts a bird next to a basket of grapes, however Stauffer states it was made in a textile centre elsewhere in the Mediterranean.[644] Baskets within scenes of plenty also appear in mosaic designs. For example, the late fourth-century Dominus Iulius mosaic from Carthage (fig. 74) depicts the lady of the house receiving gifts from servants in the form of ducks, a lamb, and notably for this discussion, a basket of olives and a basket of roses. This is interpreted as illustrating the prosperity of the house and the ease and comfort of the inhabitants living there.[645] There is also the fifth- to sixth-century mosaic depiction of the personification of Egypt, from the Nile Festival Building in Sepphoris (fig. 75). Here we see Egypt as a female figure, reclining on a basket filled with produce whilst she holds a cornucopia in one hand. That images of baskets function as a visual shorthand for plenty and earthly bounty is further underlined by its presence in combination with the cornucopia in this scene, a well-known symbol of abundance.

Henry Maguire has extensively discussed the kinds of images that were used to adorn domestic living spaces and material culture, demonstrating that the representations of flora and fauna displayed in these contexts were considered to have a numinous power, both expressing and assuring abundance.[646] In fact beyond mere depictions, this imagery functioned as a charm to attract the plenty that it showed.[647] Furthermore, as seen from the brief selection of examples above, it is rare to find this sort of decorative scheme without the inclusion of baskets. As containers, baskets were used to carry and store the results of a successful harvest – their function is inextricably tied to the hopes of people throughout the agricultural year. Therefore it is possible to extend this symbolic power to the image of the basket, as a visual shorthand for earthly abundance.

[644] Stauffer (1995) 21.
[645] Maguire (1999) 243.
[646] Maguire (1999) 243.
[647] Maguire, *et al.* (1989) 9.

The association between baskets and the concept of fertility and plenty seems logical; in a practical sense, these objects were intrinsic to the work undertaken at harvest time and were a staple agricultural tool. There are various visual depictions of baskets being used in agriculture, especially the grape harvest: stacks of baskets used for this are seen on the stone relief at Sens, France (fig. 76), and vintaging scenes featuring labourers and donkeys carrying baskets of grapes are a common feature of the inhabited vine scroll design of the sixth-century mosaic pavements of churches in Jordan (fig. 65).[648] As such, baskets can be considered an extension of the visual culture of harvests and produce, as they were essential to these activities.

These images can therefore be interpreted in a different way to Maguire's reading, which suggests a powerlessness over the natural world, resulting in the need to attract prosperity through sympathetic magic. Instead of being in thrall to the rhythms of nature, such images can communicate status and power; the power of humankind over their environment. The produce, collected in a basket, is depicted as the fruit of human labour, not the natural abundance of the earth. Ellen Swift, after Schneider, discusses similar iconography on the late Roman Graincourt silver dish (fig. 77), which depicts various foods and associated flora and fauna in the decorative rim.[649] These scenes do not depict a hope for a prosperous harvest from the benevolent earth; rather they depict nature as a "larder of goods for human consumption."[650] Although the imagery in the case of the Graincourt dish is framed by the dining context in which the object would be used, it still illustrates the Roman power over the natural world and the owner's right to plunder such bounty.[651] As such, the symbolism of baskets can be viewed similarly. They are manufactured objects – harnessing and increasing nature's bounty through labour. They can thus be considered not only symbols of plenty within decorative schemes, but also of agricultural prowess.

III. Baskets & Personal Meaning: the evidence of Early Christian Monasticism

It has been demonstrated that baskets as objects had cultural connotations, communicating specific meanings in Late Antiquity dependent on their form and the context in which they were seen. Their

[648] Hachlili (2009) 111-147, esp. 141-2.
[649] Swift (2009) 129, Schneider (1983).
[650] Swift (2009) 129.
[651] Swift (2009) 129.

integration into late antique life went beyond pure utility; it is clear that they held significant roles and accumulated layers of meanings. However, the next natural question is whether there is also specific evidence for the sentimental meaning of baskets in their role as personal possessions. This will now be discussed in direct relation to sources on the early Christian monks of late antique Egypt and the surrounding regions.

Textual and archaeological evidence reveal a close association between baskets and early Christian monks and anchorites. The existing evidence for basket making in late antique monastic settlements often reveals two aspects to this manual occupation; that it was both a spiritual and economic activity. Especially interesting is the fact that these baskets were not exclusively monastic material culture; rather, it seems that the products of their labours would have been sold in marketplaces across the country. Therefore these baskets would likely have found their way into a variety of homes in late antique Egypt, and perhaps even beyond. This section will consider the relevant evidence for the personal meanings of these objects for their owners – whether they are the same monks who manufactured the baskets, or others who later acquired the finished objects.

III.1. The Process of Production

A review of the available evidence for the production of these monastic baskets suggests that the process of making was as important as the finished object, and as such needs to be explored in order to determine any effect this may have had upon subsequent meaning. The main sources of evidence for their manufacture are surviving archaeological examples and textual sources. In terms of textual evidence, there is a large body of literature about the lives of early Christian monastics.[652] Sources are generally in two forms – the 'Lives' or *Vitae* of key figures from the ascetic community during this period, and collections of sayings and guidance from the desert monastics. The 'Lives', such as of Antony and Pachomius, often include details on daily activities in these desert settlements.[653] Indeed, the *Life of Antony* states that the monk spent his time plaiting

[652] Harmless (2004) provides a good overview of early monastic literature from Egypt.
[653] The *Life of Antony* was written by Athanasius in the fourth century: see White (1998). Various versions of the *Life of Pachomius* exist in Coptic, Greek, and Latin, with translations into the main modern European languages. See Harmless (2004) 148 for an overview of the relevant editions.

to make baskets to give to those who brought him provisions.[654] The collection of writings known as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or 'Sayings of the Fathers', also frequently mention basket making as it provides advice on correct monastic living.[655] It has already been noted in the source critique that these texts are based upon oral histories and thus are unlikely to be an entirely realistic representation of everyday life.[656] However they nonetheless show us the significance of basket making within this very specific lifestyle, and the general context in which the main descriptions of activities take place are likely to contain elements of truth.

The process of manufacture, as suggested by the textual sources, is as follows. Palm leaves, from trees usually grown on or near the monastery site, were split into strips of the desired width and length after which they could be dried and stored, until ready to use.[657] These strips were then steeped in water to make them pliable.[658] The monk would then sit plaiting these palm strips together to form a long braid, as described in the Life of Antony.[659] Once one long plait had been made, it could be made into other objects—of most interest to us is of course the basket, however other products mentioned in the texts include floor and sleeping mats, and even clothing.[660] Once the body of the basket was formed then handles could be fashioned and added.[661] The veracity of this process is supported the manufacture of modern-day Egyptian plaited baskets, which echoes these same techniques and methods.[662]

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[654] Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 53; trans. White (1998).
[655] There are two main collections of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. The 'Alphabetical Collection' collates the sayings alphabetically by author; quoted henceforth as AP, using the English translation by Ward (1984). The 'Systematic Collection' groups the sayings into topics; quoted henceforth as AP Sys, using the French translation by Guy (1993-2005).
[656] See chapter 1, section IV.1.
[657] The story of the initiation of new monks into monastic life includes the description of collecting palm leaves from trees growing in 'the marsh'. *AP* Macarius the Great 33; trans. Ward (1984).
[658] "It was said of the same Abba Arsenius that he only changed the water for his palm leaves once a year; the rest of the time he simply added to it. One old man implored him in these words, 'Why do you not change the water for these palm leaves when it smells bad?' He said to him, 'Instead of the perfumes and aromatics which I used in the world I must bear this bad smell.'" AP Arsenius 18; Ward (1984).
[659] "[…]someone pulled the plait or reed of the basket he was weaving." Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 53; trans. White (1998).
[660] For example, Isaac describes Abba Pambo as wearing garments "woven from palm fronds", AP Isaac 7; trans. Ward (1984).
[661] AP Sys 17.20: An elderly monk overhears his neighbour despairing that he has nothing to make handles out of for his baskets, so unfastens the handles from his finished baskets and gives them to his needy neighbour. Trans. Guy (1993-2005).
[662] See for example the video accompanying Wendrich (1999), which shows the process used to make plaited baskets in modern Egypt.

The shape of the baskets is formed by coiling the plait around in a circular manner to create the base and sides, sewing the parallel edges of the plait together as you work.[663] The thread used to sew the edges of the plaits was often made from thin strips of unspun palm leaf.[664] The result is a flexible, soft form basket, the remains of which have been found at several archaeological sites in the deserts of Egypt. Fig. 78, a basket recovered from the monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes and dating to the late-sixth or early-seventh century AD, illustrates the form these objects take. Other finds from the site also highlight the multiple stages of production involved in making sewn plait baskets. Fig. 79 is a small bundle palm leaf strips, cut to size but wrapped together and stored until needed for plaiting. Also plaits, yet to be made into baskets and other products have been found at the Thebes site. Fig. 80 is a five-strand plait, again from the monastery of Epiphanius. The edges of the plait are of a SZ orientation (meaning that they are perpendicular rather than parallel to each other); this allows the plait to form a larger fabric as seen in baskets and mats, as the edges are pulled together and interlock when sewn together.[665] The resultant appearance is one of a continuously plaited surface, as the hard edge of each braid is hidden beneath the surface of the plait it is connecting to (fig. 81).[666] The tell-tale sign that these baskets are of sewn plaits and not continuously plaited fabric is the ridge that spirals around the body, indicating the edges of the braids and the location of the thread holding the plaited edges together. This can be seen in fig. 61, a two-handled basket of the fourth- to sixth-centuries from Qasr Ibrim in Upper Egypt; horizontal ridges are discernible at regular intervals across the fabric of the basket, indicating where the plaits have been sewn together.

III.2. Basket making as a Spiritual Activity

It is clear that the sewn plait method of basket making employed by the early Christian monks was a technique that involved a number of stages, and a significant amount of time depending on how many baskets were being produced. It is also clear, again from the textual evidence, that basket-making as an activity was not considered a meaningless occupation. As Wipszycka discusses,

[663] Extensive references exist in the monastic texts to the sewing or stitching together of plaits to make baskets. For example, in AP Sys. 4.5, describing a monk stitiching palm leaves until the sixth hour; trans. Guy (1993-2005).
[664] Wendrich (1999) 213.
[665] Wendrich (1999) 210.
[666] Wendrich (1991) 61-63.

basketry was considered suitable labour for monks as the repetitive nature of the work meant that it did not require too much concentration nor distract from prayers and spiritual meditation.[667] Furthermore the apparent humble nature of basket making would not endanger their inner tranquillity through raising ambitions, or giving satisfaction.[668] These key points, all of which portray the weaving of baskets as a repetitive and ascetic practice, are ideas strongly present within early monastic literature.

Evidence from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* suggests that the significance of plaiting and basket making was linked in part to the low level of concentration required. This allowed the monks to work whilst still praying unceasingly, which was viewed as a crucial aspect of living successfully as an anchorite. The concept of unceasing prayer apparently stems from a Biblical passage, often quoted in desert literature on how to live a virtuous Christian lifestyle.[669] The link between basket making and unceasing prayer is directly discussed within the Alphabetical Collection's sayings of Lucius. In one of the descriptions, the abbot Lucius at Enna chides a group of monks who do no work but claim to pray unceasingly, despite stopping to eat and sleep. He explains that by weaving with palm leaves, he can pray all day whilst working, then sell his work for money which he then spends on both food and paying someone to pray for him whilst he eats and sleeps.[670] Elsewhere, other pieces of advice or anecdotes also emphasise the role of basket weaving as an activity suited to spiritual meditation. In Book 11 of the Systematic Collection, the abbot John is described as weaving palm leaves intended for two baskets into one basket and not realising until it reached the wall of his cell, so absorbed was he in spiritual contemplation.[671]

The goal of monasticism, as Harmless explains, was achieving what was known as *hesychia*—defined as a quietness and inner stillness arising from living a solitary, spiritual desert life.[672] The

[667] Wipszycka (2009) 477.
[668] Wipszycka (2009) 476. Shenoute's rules governing monastic life dictate that monks who misbehave have their duties set at the lowest level in the hierarchy, namely basket making: Shenoute, *Canons* 271, Layton (2014) 205. See also Layton (2007) 57.
[669] Harmless (2004) 62. The verse states "Pray without ceasing": 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
[670] AP Lucius 1; trans. Ward (1984).
[671] AP Sys 11.38; trans. Guy (1993-2005).
[672] Harmless (2004) 228.

risk to achieving *hesychia* is distraction, caused by both external factors and one's own thoughts.[673] This is a situation all too easy to imagine occurring whilst alone in a desert cell. It seems that plaiting and basket making activities were popular with the monks as it was compatible with this concept of *hesychia*—it was not distracting, but also allowed the practice of unceasing prayer. It is clear that this activity is regarded as 'mindless', but also that this is precisely where its value in the monastic community came from. It can be argued that the process of basket making was in fact an aid to contemplation; John Wortley discusses the role of the repetition of phrases in his paper on the meditation of early Christian monks.[674] Furthermore, Wendrich also considers the rhythmic nature of basket making, describing the movements of modern day basket makers in Egypt as choreography.[675] A striking story from the *Lausiac History* by Palladius further suggests the importance of plaiting:

> We found on arrival that he had fallen prey to the terrible ulcerous condition known as cancer. We found him under the care of a physician. He was working with his hands and weaving palm leaves and he conversed with us while his body was undergoing an operation. He acted as though it were someone else who was undergoing the knife. While his members were being cut away like locks of hair, he showed no sign whatsoever of pain, thanks to the superiority of his spiritual preparation.[676]

This story is strongly reminiscent of modern tales of patients who undergo painful surgery without anaesthetic, instead relying on meditation and hypnosis. Again, it seems likely that the manual work undertaken by the monks had a role in their meditation and contemplation of God. Thus the nature of basket making - the repeated cutting, plaiting and stitching movements that occupied the hands of the holy men undertaking such activity - can be seen as a practical support in their pursuit of an ideal spiritual life.

Another benefit of basket making can also be drawn out from the literature. More than being simply a non-distracting activity, it is also represented as being psychologically beneficial by John Cassian who, writing in the fourth century, describes how it helps to banish '*accidie*'—a type of depression, the symptoms of which are boredom with one's cell, scornful and contemptuous

[673] Harmless (2004) 229.
[674] Wortley (2006).
[675] Wendrich (1999) 331. This is something I recognise from my own basket-making practice, undertaken during the course of this research. The movements required for plaiting are indeed repetitive and after a short amount of time a rhythm is formed. With greater skill and experience, this would without doubt become more pronounced.
[676] Palladius, *Hist. Laus*. 24.2; trans. Meyer (1964).

attitude towards others, listlessness and inertia.[677] Cassian describes the life of the desert-dwelling Paul, who gathered palm leaves and worked them every day:

> And when his cave would be filled with the work of a whole year, he would set fire to it, and burn each year the work so carefully wrought: and thereby he proved that without working with his hands a monk cannot endure to abide in his place, nor can he climb any nearer the summit of holiness: and though necessity of making a livelihood in no way demands it, let it be done for the sole purging of the heart, the steadying of thought, perseverance in the cell, and the conquest and final overthrow of *accidie* itself.[678]

Here we see that it is the activity of the weaving that is given importance, and not the finished baskets, which end up being burnt. The importance assigned to the act of weaving is what helps the monk in his solitary pursuit of piety, as it keeps him from the natural feelings of listlessness and malcontent that would arise from isolation in the desert. However, this story also emphasises the ascetic nature of basket making; the element of destruction of the monk's handiwork seems to have been included to emphasise the frugal nature of the monk's life, and an abstemious lack of pride in one's own labours. That weaving plaits and making baskets fits the image of a pious ascetic is why the emphasis on plaiting seems to be so strong in the texts that discuss the lives of the early anchorites. This is certainly emphasised in the story of the Abba Arsenius who refused to change the water for steeping his palm leaves, despite the smell.[679] Such an aroma, likely similar to the stench from a vase of flowers left too long in their water, would be especially unpleasant in the confined space of a monastic cell. We also hear of Macarius' behaviour at the Monastery of Tabennisi during Lent:

> Macarius moistened a great many palm leaves and he stood in a corner until the forty days were over and it was Easter. He ate no bread and drank no water, nor did he bend his knee or lie down. He partook of nothing but a few cabbage leaves, and that on Sunday, so that he might at least give the appearance of eating. Except for the prayer in his heart and the palm leaves in his hands, he did nothing.[680]

Extracts such as these really do emphasise the affinity between the processes of basket making and the asceticism that the monks endeavoured to practice. In this light, the meaning and cultural image of basket making is used by the monks as what could be described as a propagandistic tool, emphasised to enhance the status of monks, their pious virtue, and the way in which they were

[677] John Cassian, *Collationes* 24; trans. Waddell.
[678] John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1; trans. Waddell (1998).
[679] AP Arsenius 18; trans. Ward (1984).
[680] *Hist. Laus.*18.14-15; trans. Meyer (1964).

perceived by others outside the community. In fact, Wipszycka suggests that whilst basket making and the preliminary activity of plaiting palm leaves feature heavily in the texts, the inherent bias towards this activity means that it is unlikely to be representative of the real everyday life within these communities.[681] Elsewhere we can see that monks were actually engaged in types of labour other than weaving baskets and plaiting fibre; this activity actually came bottom in the hierarchy of monastic jobs, with monks promoted to more skilled activities over time or through demonstration of suitability.[682] This creates an interesting disjuncture between the apparent cultural worth of these objects and the reality of basket making as a low status activity. The fact that the activity of basket making was considered suitable for monks – because of the low level of skill and concentration, and lack of prestige – likely also made it in reality a dull and thankless occupation, especially compared to other useful but more engaging tasks such as cooking or carpentry. Paradoxically therefore, it seems that the reason this task was likely unpopular also provides its value for promoting within the texts. The essentially ascetic and humble nature of basket making allows us to identify a cultural cachet for baskets and their production. Embodied in the act of weaving palm leaves into plaits for baskets and mats is a sense of extreme humility and renunciation of the trappings of the society beyond the limits of the desert. Thus the baskets might outwardly reflect values that the monks wished to emphasise, despite in reality the practice of basket making being considered somewhat differently. The completed basket can therefore be considered to function not only as symbols of the monks and their values, but also tools to promote the ideal monastic identity.

That the baskets woven by monks can be considered as symbolic of their lives within the monastery stems from these objects' material embodiment of the values they promoted. This is an interesting point to consider when archaeological evidence shows the burial of monks at the Monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes with their woven baskets and sleeping mats.[683] Fig. 82 is a picture of one such grave at the monastery; the split basket can be seen at the head of the body. In a community where these men renounced their worldly possessions, these baskets may have

[681] Wipszycka (2009) 485.
[682] Layton collates the references to different monastic occupations from the text of Shenoute's *Canons*; jobs include cooking, carpentry, and irrigation work; trans. Layton (2014) 66-67.
[683] Winlock (1926) vol. 1, 50.

paradoxically represented their ascetic lifestyle and the disavowal of the normal trappings of life in Late Antiquity through their material nature.[684] The fact that the basket is split open suggests that it is intended to form a covering along with the mat (likely also woven by the monks) next to it, however this need not remove the significance of the basket. It is the process of production undertaken by the monks that associates the final object with their lifestyle, not the function of the basket as a container that would have been removed as soon as it was split open.

The possible symbolism of the burial of baskets with the Epiphanius monks also comes from their burial with their leather aprons, another symbol (this time in terms of their dress) of their identity as holy ascetics.[685] Finally, too, in literary sources we see evidence of baskets being represented as suitable symbols for monks and as reminders of their identity. The *Lausiac History* sees the wealthy Melania describe the final actions of the monk Pambo before he died:

> Shortly afterward this man of God fell asleep, not consumed by a fever or any sickness, but in the act of stitching a basket when he was seventy years old. He had sent for me, and when he was ready to make the last stitch and was on the point of departing, he said to me: 'Take this basket from my hands that you may remember me, for I have nothing else I might leave you.'[686]

Here a basket, woven by Pambo himself is described as the only possession he has to give, and is suitable as a token of his life. It could be interpreted therefore as symbolic of his life as a desert monk, representing the time spent in spiritual contemplation as he performs menial and ascetic labour, having renounced his worldly possessions. It is portrayed within the story that such an object is a suitable reminder of the old man for exactly these attributes.

III.3. Basket making as an Economic Activity

It seems clear that the production of baskets was important in a cultural sense to the identity of the monks, their desert communities and the lifestyles they had chosen to take. However, more than just a spiritual activity, there were economic benefits to making baskets; in fact it was as much

[684] Interestingly, sewn plait baskets were also found in the graves of monks at the monastery of Naqlun in Egypt, dating from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries AD. They were found placed on top of the coffins and seem to have had some role in the burial rites of the deceased. Perhaps this is another example of baskets being symbolic of the monastic way of life. See Łyżwa-Piber (2005) 242-3.
[685] Winlock (1926) vol. 1, 49-50. For more on monastic dress in Egypt, see Upson-Saia (2011) and Thomas (1990).
[686] *Hist. Laus.* 10.5; trans. Meyer (1964).

about self-sufficiency in terms of satisfying their material needs as it was about attaining a spiritual goal. Archaeological evidence shows that baskets were used within the monastic environment, as the examples from the Monastery of Epiphanius show. They are also mentioned regularly within the documentary texts from the same site; baskets were used for carrying wine jars, bread, offerings, and papyri.[687] However there is also often a void in the archaeological record, with often no trace of the practice of basket making to be found at excavated monastic sites. For example, from Esna in Upper Egypt, the location of several hermitage communities, very little archaeological evidence relating to handiwork was discovered, except for what seems to be evidence of leather working.[688] In terms of basketwork there is no trace left with any remains that might have existed having been sold, blown away, stolen or destroyed in the intervening years.[689]

However, textual evidence suggests much of the basketry produced at monastic sites was sold outside of these settlements. This is clear from the description of a visit to Abba Sisoes in the Alphabetical Collection:

> Some brothers went to see Abba Sisoes to hear a word from him. But he did not speak to them saying, 'Excuse me.' Seeing his little baskets, the visitors asked his disciple Abraham, 'What do you do with these little baskets?' He said, 'We sell them here and there.' Hearing this the old man said, 'Even Sisoes eats now and then.'[690]

The industry of monks in these desert settlements was crucial as a means of supporting themselves, and maintaining a self-sufficient lifestyle, as well as also providing for visitors, of which there could be many.[691] In this light, the economic revenue that the monks obtained from making and selling baskets was as key to the maintenance of their lifestyle as any spiritual value the activity had. It was a means of providing for oneself without the danger of straying towards ostentation or personal pride in manual skills. The Abbot Pistamon is recorded as telling a monk that there is no harm that comes from selling his handiwork.[692] There are also documentary texts that show the selling of baskets outside of the monastery; a Coptic text from the eighth-century monastery of

[687] Winlock (1926) vol. 1, 75.
[688] Sauneron (1972) 38.
[689] Sauneron (1972) 38.
[690] AP Sisoes 16; trans. Ward (1984). See also AP Megethios 1.
[691] Caner (2002) 43.
[692] AP Pistamon 1; trans. Ward (1984).

Apollo at Bawit records an order signed by Germanus authorising the sale of "plaited work".[693] As Wipszycka explains, the number of monks living in the desert communities had the potential to produce a significant amount of baskets, therefore their product had to be of a good quality in order to find buyers in the large cities of the Nile Delta and Alexandria.[694] But it seems that monks did indeed successfully sell their wares, and evidence for the extensive transport and trading network within Egypt suggests that they had plenty of opportunity to find markets for their goods. Furthermore this would have been necessary as there was no guarantee that the monks could find sufficient buyers in their local area, with goods having the potential to travel great distances from their place of origin.[695]

The literary sources describe monks selling their wares personally within markets in nearby towns and cities. For example, Philagrius is described in the Alphabetical Collection as leaving the desert near Jerusalem to visit the city where he would stand "in the market place to sell his manual work".[696] Similarly, the *Lausiac History* describes how a monk named Aphthonius the Good was sent from his monastery at Tabennesi to sell the monks' produce in the city of Alexandria, as he was the least likely to be led astray.[697] This monastery was founded on the banks of the River Nile, a location especially useful for communication with Alexandria and travel to and from the city.[698] In terms of geographical transportation links, the Nile would have been crucial for the monks to move their goods for trade elsewhere in Egypt. It is also a reminder that not all monasteries were the isolated desert communities that are famous in early monastic literature.

Many of these stories of selling wares emphasise the danger of travelling to cities and show the monks being led astray or dealing with temptation from the 'world'; for this reason they are likely to be exaggerated. Nonetheless, this emphasis on the danger of towns and cities does not mean that these trips were not taken. There were amenities that allowed the travel and transportation of goods, for example the *pandocheion*, or lower class hostelry establishments that are mentioned

[693] BM EA 75330 side (B); trans. Clackson (2008) 56-57.
[694] Wipszycka (2009) 479.
[695] Wipszycka (2009) 479.
[696] AP Philagrius 1; trans. Ward (1984).
[697] *Hist. Laus.* 32.8; trans. Meyer (1964).
[698] Meyer (1964) 92 n.270.

frequently as stopping points for monks on their travels.[699] In the *Vitae Patrum* there is the story of the young monk Marinus who stops at a *pandocheion* en route between his monastery and the market where he is selling his goods.[700] As well as the transport afforded by the Nile, there was also a network of canals and roads that the monks could have used.[701] Most of these routes eventually linked to Alexandria, the main Mediterranean port and trading link to the rest of the Empire, however there were other road routes that were important for trade, such as the road linking Coptos on the Nile with Berenike on the Red Sea.[702] Berenike was a major trading post that linked the Roman Empire with the east; Mediterranean and Egyptian goods were transferred into Nile ships, transported by boat to Koptos, loaded on camels and through the eastern desert to Berenike to be transported by sea to India, Arabia, and Africa.[703]

Baskets as a monastic product have been discussed before but in terms of their economic role within the comunities, rather than their wider cultural meaning or lives after manufacture. The following three sections will now assess the potential for monastic baskets to function as gifts, heirlooms and souvenirs.

III.4. Baskets as Gifts

The material discussed above shows that monastic baskets were sometimes given as gifts; however despite the evidence this is a topic that has not before been studied. Of particular note is the aforementioned description of Melania the Elder and Pambo's encounter, which is worth repeating in full:

> For the blessed Melania told me this: "When I first came from Rome to Alexandria and heard about his virtue from the blessed Isidore, who showed me the way to him in the desert, I took him a silver coffer containing three hundred pounds of silver and invited him to share in my wealth. He was sitting weaving palm leaves, and he merely blessed me and said: 'May God reward you!' And he told his steward Origen: 'Take this and dispense it to all the brethren down in Libya and on the islands, for those monasteries are in greater need.' He gave him orders not to dispense any of it in Egypt because that country was better off." She continued: "I was standing by and expecting to be honoured or praised by him for my donation, but I heard nothing from him, and so I spoke up to him: 'So you may know, O lord, how much it is, there are three hundred pounds.' He did not so much as raise

[699] Remie Constable (2004) 28.
[700] "Life of Marina", *Vitae Patrum*; PL 73.
[701] Adams (2007) 21-22.
[702] Adams (2007) 23. For more on the archaeology of this route and the settlements along it, see Cuvigny (2003).
[703] Wendrich, *et al*. (2003) 51.

> his head, but said: 'My child, He who measures the mountains knows better the amount of the silver. If you were giving it to me, you spoke well; but if you are giving it to God, who did not overlook the two obols, then be quiet.'" […] "Shortly afterward this man of God fell asleep, not consumed by a fever or any sickness, but in the act of stitching a basket when he was seventy years old. He had sent for me, and when he was ready to make the last stitch and was on the point of departing, he said to me: 'Take this basket from my hands that you may remember me, for I have nothing else I might leave you.'" Then she prepared him for burial by winding his body in linen cloths. She buried him and then withdrew from the desert, and she kept the basket with her until her death.[704]

In this story Pambo gives Melania a gift in the form of a basket that he made himself. The text notes that she curated the object until her own death, suggesting that it was a treasured possession of sentimental value - something emphasised by the low economic value of the object.[705] Both chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis have discussed how gifts have the ability to represent their donors in material form.[706] As such, the basket received by Melania represents Pambo. That it is a handmade gift further enhances this fact – the investment of time and effort into the creation of the object results in the basket symbolising the identity of its maker.[707] It can also be seen as a memento of Pambo for other reasons. Firstly, as he states himself, Pambo is donating the basket specifically so that she has something to remember him by. As such, he is acknowledging the capacity of material objects to function as a means to preserve and evoke memories. Crucial to this is the context surrounding the gift exchange. The basket is given in the moments preceding Pambo's death, a significant and emotive event for Melania. As such it is likely that Melania thus associated the object with that moment in the object's (and her own) life course, and provides in part the source of the basket's evident sentimental value. Gifts function to create connections and relationships between the donor and recipient.[708] Therefore, possession of the object allows Melania to maintain her relationship with Pambo after his death. The basket represents Pambo in material form, meaning that Melania's retention and curation of the object allows their relationship to be sustained despite his absence.

Related to this is the fact that the object represents Pambo more broadly in his role as monk rather than solely as Pambo the individual. The nature of baskets and their symbolism of the monastic

[704] *Hist. Laus.* 10.2-5; trans. Meyer (1964).
[705] This would exclude the possibility of curation because of the basket's intrinsic worth. In Diocletian's Price Edict, woven baskets are given a maximum cost of 10 denarii. *Edict Dioc*. 32.18; trans. Graser (1959).
[706] See chapter 2, section III.3.i; chapter 4, section III.2 & section IV. Also Mauss (1966) 10; Gregory (1982) 45.
[707] Belk (1988) 144; Gell (1998) 23-4; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) 8.
[708] Gregory (1982) 41.

lifestyle has been discussed earlier in this chapter. In light of this, it is clear that the object is also a memento of Pambo's life as a monk and his rejection of the ordinary secular world. As such, it is the perfect gift to give to Melania – the fact that he says that he has no other possessions to give her further emphasises the importance and aptness of the basket. As Sherry states, gifts are selected as representations of the giver's identity.[709] The basket is therefore a potent symbol of the asceticism and monastic lifestyle of Pambo.

We also need to consider the role of reciprocity within this scene. Mauss stated that gift exchange creates systems of obligations in which counter-gifts are made.[710] Melania is visiting Pambo to give a gift of a large amount of silver to the church, via the monk. Despite the gift not being intended for Pambo personally, the gift of the basket could be symptomatic of the perceived requirement of reciprocity in social gift exchange. However, adherence to such social conventions seems an unlikely act from a monk who renounced mainstream society to live as an ascetic, and so pointedly displayed a personal disinterest in the initial gift from Melania. Nonetheless, other extracts from the monastic texts demonstrate that reciprocity in terms of gift giving was a part of monastic behaviour. In the Life of Antony, the monk is described as making baskets to give to those who bring him gifts and sustenance.[711] Therefore, Pambo may be displaying conventional monastic behaviour. It may also be a sign of the significance of the immediate event – his own death. The giving of the basket is an acknowledgment that he will not be able to be with her physically, and demonstrates a reliance on material culture in such contexts to provide comfort and physical company.

The encounter between Melania and Pambo is not the only evidence of gift giving by the desert monks within the texts. The Systematic Collection tells of three monks who visited the holy man Achilles, who was working in his cell. One of them asked Achilles to make him a fishing-net but Achilles said no; the second monk asked again, so that they might have something to remember the monk by when they returned to their own monastery. Again Achilles declined. The third monk had a bad reputation, and so when he asked Achilles to make him a fishing net, the elderly man agreed

[709] Sherry (1983) 159.
[710] Mauss (1966) 10-11.
[711] Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 53; trans. White (1998).

so as not to make him sorrowful.[712] The elements relating to the meaning of gifts discussed in relation to the story of Melania and Pambo are also valid here. Again the evidence presents an object being acknowledged as having the capacity to become a memento of someone. The reason that the monk desires this object is because he wishes it to be a material reminder of Achilles after they leave him and return to their monastery. As such, it is clear objects were understood to have this evocative capability. The third man however does receive a handmade gift from the monk, which can therefore be considered to represent in a material form the essence of the donor's identity.[713]

III.5. Baskets as Souvenirs

The above quote from the Systematic Collection records the making of a net for another monk. It has been established that this object would become a memento of the maker. Furthermore, the object would function as a souvenir, reminding the owner of their time spent away visiting the monk Achilles. However, in light of the discussion in chapter 5 regarding Christian pilgrim souvenirs, I also believe that this net could function as a blessing or *eulogia*. Material blessings represent a physical means of conveying intangible spiritual power.[714] *Eulogiae* such as pilgrim tokens, oil, and water all become sanctified through their physical contact with a holy place or person. The same could be said for the objects produced by the desert monks. Like other mementoes, such as heirlooms or souvenirs, blessings or *eulogiae* communicate identity, albeit it a holy one, through their materiality. Assigned to this identity is a surplus value in the form of spiritual power, from which their significance as religious objects stems. Thus in terms of the net made by Achilles, his identity and thus spiritual power is embodied by the object, allowing it to act not only as a reminder of the monk but as a religious and amuletic object. Certainly, holy men and women are shown elsewhere in the texts to have the ability to perform miracles – a potent demonstration of their spiritual power.[715] As such, an object that has been touched by a monk would no doubt be considered as *eulogia*. For example, the Alphabetical Collection records a monk

[712] AP Sys 10.18; trans. Guy (2003). This tale is also found in AP Achilles 1; trans. Ward (1984).
[713] See chapter 2, section III.3.i of this thesis for further discussion of the meaning of handmade gifts.
[714] See discussion in chapter 5, section III.1.
[715] For example, see the story of Abba Macarius curing the paralytic child: AP Macarius the Great 15; trans. Ward (1984).

named Daniel as wearing the clothes of the late Abba Arsenius in order to receive a blessing.[716] The importance of the role of physical contact in communicating sanctity is clear from this. Furthermore, these baskets are not simply touched by the monks who made them – they were laboriously constructed as part of a religious lifestyle. The activity of producing the basket itself is presented in the texts as a spiritual activity and one conducted during prayer, therefore the holiness of such objects for the faithful was likely to be enhanced by the biography of the object. Melania's act of keeping the basket can thus be interpreted as the preservation of a material blessing from the hands of Pambo, in the same way as we see pilgrim souvenirs being curated within the home in the description of Hesperius by Augustine.[717] That such objects can function as blessings as well as souvenirs, gifts, or heirlooms, further demonstrates the ability of material culture to have multiple identities and layers of significance simultaneously. This is discussed further in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Documentary sources also show that many of the visitors attended the desert ascetics explicitly to receive a blessing in material form, or to effect a healing or other miracle. A sixth- to seventh-century Coptic letter to three clergy requests such a token:

> Anuti, the least sinner, it is who writes to his beloved lord and holy father, Apa Makarios, and Apa Apollo, and my brother Joseph, saying: I greet you with my whole heart. […] Be so good to your son and give a little water of the feet of holy men and a little blessing of our father and a little . . . . . in your blessing. Give them to Pamoute and he will bring them to me and they will be a healing to me. Verily I hang upon nothing of this world except your blessing. Salvation in the Lord![718]

In this letter, the *eulogia* in question is based around the water with which the holy men have washed their feet. Just as with pilgrim tokens, the physical contact between the holy figure and the neutral material is what gives these gifts and souvenirs their power. Therefore it seems highly probable that other items, such as their handmade baskets, would also function as *eulogiae*.

It also needs to be considered how these objects would have been acquired and if this affects their status as souvenirs. The examples of baskets and other *eulogiae* that appear in the texts are given

[716] AP Arsenius 42; trans Ward (1984).
[717] Augustine *City of God* 22.8; trans. Dods (1956).
[718] P.Mich.Copt.8.

directly by the monks to their recipients. As such the biography of the objects – their provenance and therefore authenticity – is known first hand by the new owner of the object. However, the evidence shows that baskets made within monastic communities were often sold to the wider community, and had the potential to travel further afield. Would their origin and method of manufacture create meaning for their subsequent owners? From this perspective, the value of monastic baskets comes from their biography – this is what singularises them as objects and differentiates them from other baskets available for sale. However, the purchaser/owner must know the biography of the object for this value to exist. Would buyers likely know the origin of these baskets? In terms of whether these objects could be identified as monastic baskets once outside of the monastery is difficult to say. With regards to their physical appearance, the sewn plaits technique was relatively common in the Roman period and can be found archaeologically within Egypt from non-monastic sites such as Qasr Ibrim (fig. 61), and also in pictorial sources from elsewhere, such as the mosaics from the Great Palace in Constantinople (fig. 83). Yet if the large quantities suggested by the literary sources were indeed being produced and traded by the monks in Egypt, then this type of basket could well become associated with early Christian monks and monasteries, and identified by contemporaries as a specific object 'type'. It also depends on the circumstances of acquisition. For example, if a basket was bought directly from a monk who was visiting a market or city with his wares, as we have seen described within the monastic literature, then it is clear to the purchaser that the basket is a monastic product. Similarly, should the person acquire the object from the site of the monastery itself, again it is clear that the product has a monastic origin. We might even assume that if the baskets were sold through a third party in locations far from their point of origin they would still be identified as monastic objects as the retailer would be able emphasise this point.

A contributing factor to this is the popularity that the early Christian monks and ascetics had within wider society. The *Lausiac History* describes the provision of a guesthouse at the monastery of Nitria, which provided accommodation for visitors who could stay for up to three years.[719] The holy men were popular with visitors, something further attested by the amount of graffiti found in cells at the Monastery of Epiphanius, left by people who came to see the holy men dwelling

[719] *Hist. Laus.,* 7.4; trans. Meyer (1964).

there.[720] This in turn suggests that there would have been ample opportunity for the acquisition of objects such as baskets first-hand from monastic sites by travellers, tourists, and pilgrims to the communities. As such, monastic baskets could also function as souvenirs more broadly, representing samples of the location's material culture and evoking the visiting experience in material terms.[721]

III.6. Baskets as Heirlooms

The heirloom is the final kind of meaningful object that we need to consider as a possible status for monastic baskets. Heirlooms showcase the capacity for objects to retain memories; their movement across generations brings together disparate family members and evokes nostalgia for times past.[722] Looking to the story of Pambo and Melania, we see the basket functioning as a memento of the last moment shared by Melania and the elderly monk. It also represents the inheritance by Melania of Pambo's worldly possessions – he states that he has nothing else to give. Combined with the subsequent curation of the object by Melania, it seems that in this case the basket can indeed represent an heirloom object. However, we do not know what happened to the basket on the death of Melania. As with any possession, the potential trajectories are multiple. Perhaps the basket was inherited by her own children who, understanding its significance, curated it within the home. Alternatively, Melania may well have left all of her possessions to the church, in which case its biography would likely have ensured its value was appreciated. The fact that there was no visual sign of its biographical importance – unlike for example, the purpose-made heirlooms discussed in chapter 3 - means that its significance stemming from the story of Pambo might have become detached from the object itself, surviving only via the written text. Of course, the other alternative is that the basket was discarded, either through indifference or mistake.

The distinctive feature of heirloom objects is that they are closely associated with family; they preserve the identity of past owners and keep genealogical memories alive.[723] However the giving of the basket to Melania demonstrates the movement of objects outside of a family unit on the

[720] Winlock (1926) vol. 1, 13, 19.
[721] See discussion in chapter 2, section III.2. Also Stewart (1993) 138.
[722] See chapter 2, section III.1.
[723] See discussion in chapter 2, section III.1, and chapter 3.

death of an individual. This behaviour can therefore be interpreted as the giving of an object to symbolise membership of the 'monastic family'. Certainly, the texts posit the monastic community as a surrogate family unit, with monks renouncing their biological families to adopt the monastic lifestyle, and calling their fellow ascetics Father and Brother.[724] There is also textual evidence of the inheritance of objects between these monastic brothers. As briefly mentioned above, the Alphabetical Collection describes the inheritance by a monk named Daniel of the clothing of the elder Abba Arsenius: "He left me his leather tunic, his white hair-shirt and his palm-leaf sandals. Although unworthy, I wear them, in order to gain his blessing."[725] Therefore the act of bequeathing the basket to Melania can be interpreted as providing her with a symbolic membership of the community. By extension, this action can represent the esteem in which the monks held her, and their symbolic acknowledgement of her faith and piety.

The potential material longevity of these baskets also needs to be considered within a discussion of heirlooms. Weiner considers the need for inalienable objects to possess a level of permanence that ensures they can retain the memories they accumulate.[726] The basket given in the story of Pambo and Melania is newly made, however can we know that other such objects within the monastic environs had long lives, perhaps over several owners? Archaeological evidence from the Monastery of Epiphanius reveals the presence of an old basket featuring a patched bottom in Room 10 of the site, suggesting that it was subject to heavy use and may have been of some age, although exactly how old we are unsure.[727] If such items were considered precious possessions, it certainly did not prevent their use. This is not particularly surprising – the ascetic lifestyle did not have a place for superfluous material possessions. Even this can be seen in the clothes inherited by Daniel – as well as providing him with a blessing through their constant physical contact with his body, they are also predominantly practical items, keeping him suitably clothed and warm. Therefore baskets might well have been kept, but this would likely be a side effect of continued use, as the patching demonstrates.

[724] See, for example, the story of Abba Poemen who would turn away his family when they came to visit. *AP* Poemen 7; trans. Ward (1984).
[725] AP Arsenius 42; trans. Ward (1984) 19.
[726] Weiner (1992) 38. See also discussion in chapter 2, section II.
[727] Winlock (1926) 67.

Furthermore, if high numbers of largely similar baskets were being produced in one place, it seems unlikely that many of these objects would become singularised for those making them. However, like the clothing of Daniel, perhaps a basket that was made by or once belonged to a well-respected monk could be saved for further use after his death. Again, we note the importance on the biography of specific objects in the creation of their meaning and value. It should be emphasised that, as demonstrated by the source texts, the main value for the monastic brethren was located in the production of these objects rather than the finished items. The process of manufacture held meaning for them in way that the finished items did not. However, the act of giving these baskets to others acknowledges their understanding of the value of these objects to others beyond the monastery environment. In fact, this could well have been something that the monks utilised in the selling of their handmade wares.

It seems plausible that baskets either bought in markets or acquired directly from the monastic sites themselves could be curated and passed on within families as heirlooms. Other more formal *eulogiae* certainly have the features of inalienable possessions that would ensure their preservation over long periods of time within the home. However would baskets be suitable objects as heirlooms? There is certainly no guarantee of their survival over a period of generations. With heavy use, as the evidence from Thebes shows, the material of basketry gets worn out and breaks down. Furthermore, their material destruction is more likely to occur over a period of time outside of the dry and arid desert regions. The nature of baskets means that they are made of organic material that over time will degenerate, therefore the monastic palm leaf baskets represent a less permanent object than the other more conventional heirlooms discussed in chapter x which are commonly made from metals or glass.

IV. Discussion

IV.1. Symbols of Identity

The evidence relating to the basket making of the early Christian monks demonstrates that certain objects were considered suitable as material representations of a culture or social identity. The making of baskets was a manual task that resulted in the creation of essentially low status and

humble objects, and thus an 'industry' appropriate for the monastic lifestyle. Further than this, it actively was used within texts to enhance the ascetic status of the monks, emphasising their disavowal of mainstream society, and its materialistic trappings. As such, these objects can be seen as symbolic of the lives of their makers and their identities as ascetics. They provide a fitting material counterpart through which to communicate the intangible ideals which the monks held dear – concepts such as self-denial, lack of pride, honesty, and faith. Furthermore, these baskets can be interpreted as tools that reinforce the idea of the monk as 'other', that is, as a figure outside of, and in direct contrast to, mainstream society. The first part of this chapter explained how traditionally within late antique society, the basket had strong cultural associations with women and the gendered activities of spinning wool and weaving.[728] Therefore the emphasis placed by monks on their association with baskets is a further sign of their repudiation of worldly social roles – in this case in terms of gendered identities.[729]

Kristi Upson-Saia provides a useful comparison to the evidence of basket weaving when discussing the physical appearances of a group of early fifth-century monks from Carthage and how they used this to subvert standard gender identities.[730] We know from a letter of Augustine to this group of monks that they wore their hair long in order to emulate the Biblical figures of the Old Testament, but also to underline their liminal gender status.[731] As Upson-Saia explains, the monks in question do not consider themselves to be 'men' as they abstain from sexual activity; rather they have become through their abstinence 'natural' eunuchs, therefore can wear their hair long to signify this.[732] Similarly, this modified gender identity means that the Biblical proscription of long hair on men by St. Paul no longer applied to them, as they were no longer *men*.[733] Therefore the long haired monks criticised by Augustine not only disavow their normative masculine identity by adopting a physical appearance that asserts itself as 'other', but also could be argued to actively

[728] See section II.1 of this chapter.
[729] Much has been written on the gender identities of both holy men and women living the ascetic lifestyle in the early Christian period. For example, see McNamara (1976); Cloke (1995); Elm (1994).
[730] Upson-Saia (2011) 80-83.
[731] Augustine, *Of the Works of Monks*, 31-41; trans. Browne (1956).
[732] Upson-Saia (2011) 81.
[733] Upson-Saia (2011) 81. 1 Corinthians 11:14.

associate themselves with traditional feminine identity.[734] Consequently this further removes the identity of monks from the conventional model provided by mainstream Christian society.

If we apply such considerations to the behaviour of monks and their production of baskets, we are able to interpret this behaviour similarly. Firstly, the monks are weaving these objects predominantly within the cells that form their homes – therefore this manual labour can be understood as a product of the domestic sphere. These monks did not move to monastic quarters in order to become basket makers; rather this activity is incorporated into a life where the overarching goal is the attainment of spiritual purity and communion with God. As such, the intention behind this activity is not one of pure economics, or the development of a profession. The baskets can thus be understood as similar to the creation of objects as gifts by non-professional women recorded in the papyrological record, and discussed in chapter 4, section III.2 of this thesis. When this information is combined with the standard cultural associations between women and baskets that existed during this period, then the production of baskets by the early Christian monks can be understood as a socially subversive act in terms of denouncing their normative gender identity, and enhancing their status as outsiders. By extension the basket itself comes to be a symbolic representation of the unique identities of the monks and their chosen lifestyle. The feminine nature of such objects can also be seen in the vignette of Melania and Pambo – following on from the discussion of heirlooms and objects of female inheritance in chapter 3, the basket he gives to her is akin to the examples of small scale and mobile possessions that usually denoted female ownership.[735]

The symbolism of monastic baskets is also associated with their place of origin, in as much as they are objects physically made from a material found in the area of the monastery. As mentioned above, the monks are often described within the *Apophthegmata Patrum* as going to nearby marshes to collect leaves from the palm trees located there.[736] Other extracts suggest areas of monastic cells had small gardens in which palm trees were tended and leaves harvested.[737] As such,

[734] Long hair for women was considered natural: Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis*, 7; trans. Thelwall (1885).
[735] See chapter 3, section IV.3
[736] *AP* Macarius the Great 1; trans. Ward (1984).
[737] *AP* Silvanus 4; trans. Ward (1984).

the material nature of the baskets provided the owner with a sample of their place of origin. Their physical form reflects their unseen biography, that is, the method and location of their manufacture. Such a discussion intersects with the interpretations of souvenir objects as samples, discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis. Monastic basket can thus be understood as being samples of the local environment on an ecological level – representing the flora of this specific location, but also embodying the material culture typical of the monasteries. Like the pilgrim tokens made of earth from *loca sancta* but then further processed and manufactured into another object, these monastic baskets reference their place of origin on both environmental and socio-cultural levels. As such, these baskets have much in common with the more conventional pilgrim *eulogiae* discussed in chapter 5.

IV.2. Behaviours and processes

The evidence discussed within this chapter also reveals the way in which the production of an object can have as much meaning as the finished item. As such, the behaviours exhibited by monks in creating baskets, and the manual processes involved in these objects' construction, can be understood as having deep significance and thus value to the monks. This presents another important aspect of object biography; as well as where an object is from, its material, and who made it, the details of *how* it is made also create meaning.

As drawn out in the monastic sources, the physical process of basket making demanded little in relation to the activity of the body and mind. The level of concentration required for preparing palm leaves, plaiting them, and stitching them into baskets was low. This allowed other actions such as prayer or discussion to occur at the same time as the production activity. The importance assigned to leaving the mind free for contemplation and spiritual works was a feature of the making process that directly contributed to the popularity of the activity. Furthermore, the low level of skills required in the production of the baskets meant that it was a task available to all the monks. As such it was a process that afforded equality to all monks in terms of access to work and humility in one's efforts, embodied within the fabric of the baskets.

The process of manufacture also had more direct and immediate effects separate to the creation of a basket. As discussed earlier, the making of baskets involves repetitive movements and physical action that corresponds to specific stages in the construction. These actions create a meditative atmosphere and state of concentration for the monk undertaking them. In this sense, as well as leaving the mind free for contemplation, the physical actions involved in basket making might in fact function as an aid to prayer, as can be seen in the use of rosary beads in modern Catholicism. The psychological effect of the process of basket making is also seen in John Cassian's emphasis on its ability to fend off depressive episodes.[738] Thus the basket making activities can be understood as powerful spiritual and psychological tools within the lives of the monks. Distinctions can therefore be made between the value of basket making as an activity for the early Christian Egyptian monks, and the value of the completed baskets for others not involved in their manufacture. For monks the process held meaning, whereas the finished objects were likely valued by them according to the baskets' role as commodities to be sold, thus providing an income. However, even within the monastery, completed baskets made by their monastic brethren may well have had different meanings for monks. This is suggested by the quote that describes Daniel wearing the clothing of a deceased monk to gain a blessing.[739] The esteem held for their fellow brethren may have resulted therefore in the baskets made by certain individuals being considered as meaningful objects, in much the same way as monastic baskets were thought of as souvenirs or *eulogiae* by those outside the monastery.[740] Such an interpretation is reinforced by the story of Achilles and the fishing net, and the way in which the monks are shown to desire a handmade object from him.[741]

The processes and behaviours associated with monastic basket making can also be assessed from the perspective of those visitors or shoppers who acquired the finished products. It is likely that the manufacture of baskets and the exhibition of this behaviour became a symbolic part of their identity as Christian ascetics. Would visitors to the monasteries see basket making first-hand? The evidence of the practice in the archaeological record, combined with the emphasis within the

[738] John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1; trans. Waddell (1998).
[739] *AP* Arsenius 42; trans Ward (1984).
[740] As demonstrated by Melania's treatment of the basket given to her by Pambo: *Hist. Laus.* 10.5; trans. Meyer (1964).
[741] AP Sys 10.18; trans. Guy (1993-2005).

textual sources, suggests to me that this would have been a promoted activity – perhaps highly visible but not extensively practiced. In addition, the sight of monks selling these handmade objects would also implicitly refer to their process of creation – the baskets were an index of the monks' labours, therefore referring directly to the act of manufacture.[742] It can therefore be interpreted that basket making was also a socially expected behaviour that the monks were anticipated to display. The activity can thus be seen to have importance for both monks and those outside of the monastic environment as a sign of their authenticity as holy men. For those who buy or are gifted monastic baskets, the process of manufacture also affects meaning and therefore holds importance. The fact that the monks make the baskets whilst praying or undertaking other spiritual activities could well increase the value in terms of the finished object's spiritual power. The heightened level of physical contact and meditation during its creation could deepen the significance of baskets as *eulogiae*, and further enhance their status as meaningful objects. Such a perspective has not before been considered in relation to the monastic lifestyle and baskets as objects, and thus provides an original contribution to scholarship on this topic.

Beyond the processes involved in the creation of baskets, their movement between individuals can also be interpreted as an expected action and behaviour. The habit of asking for both tangible and intangible blessings during pilgrimages is clearly demonstrated by the descriptions provided by the Piacenza Pilgrim.[743] Furthermore monks were often asked for material blessings relating to their sanctity, as the letter requesting water used for foot washing shows.[744] Such behaviours become routine – consequently there existed both an expectation of creation and a desire for acquisition with regards to these objects. As such the giving and receiving of baskets inside and out of the monastic environment became a material communication between the monks and mainstream society. This action symbolised the relationship between two different modes of living, and ensured the creation of a connection based upon material means. It also provided the monks with a way of representing themselves in material form to others – both the basket and the process of manufacture embodied the identity of the Christian ascetic. The material form of the basket allows the concepts associated with this to become tangible and portable, so that fleeting experiences such as the

[742] Thomas (1991) 16. See also the discussion of handmade gifts in chapter 2.
[743] Piacenza Pilgrim 188.42; trans. Wilkinson (1977).
[744] P.Mich.Copt.8.

process of manufacture can be secured in a physical sense, and ideals such as asceticism and piety are given a physical form that can be communicated to others without the presence of the monks. This is something that is especially important given the nature of their lives and their locations often separated from the main community. The baskets' agency thus allows the transmission of ideas alongside their own physical movement between individuals.

IV.3. Layers of Meaning

This case study of monastic baskets explicitly demonstrates the way in which objects can have layers of meaning and different kinds of value simultaneously. This is clearly seen in the different scales of value and meaning experienced by the monks themselves compared to laypeople, and the corresponding emphases on process versus completed object. Similarly, for each group of people there is the potential for the baskets to concurrently occupy differing statuses and modes of meaning. For the monastic creators of the object, we can see that meaning was embodied through process and the act of making. Furthermore, as outlined above, these objects came to represent the lives and identities of the monks, allowing the representation of themselves in physical form. However of seemingly equal importance was the potential economic value of the finished objects, as it provided a means of financial support and thus independence. As such, the finished objects do have a meaning, albeit one that is quite drastically different from the reasons others might appreciate these baskets.

Layers of meaning also exist for the baskets owned by lay people beyond the monastery environs. Firstly, the basket has a value in a practical sense, inasmuch as they have a specific utility that is derived from their material nature. However, they can also represent objects of religious worth, occupying as they do the position of blessings or *eulogiae*. As such they can be seen to transform from a commodity to a holy object, or represent both simultaneously. In a secular sense, these objects also communicate geographical locations, and the context of their acquisition through reference to their place of origin in not only material terms but also through their capacity to retain memories for the owner. They can therefore function as souvenirs and mementoes, and have a worth that is derived from their ability to evoke other places in space and time.

The key to these multiple scales of value and meaning is dependent upon the biographies of these objects and which aspects are emphasised at different times. Context here is crucial; the meaning of a basket within a monk's cell compared to one within the ordinary domestic sphere would be very different. As such it is clear that meaning and subsequent value is closely associated to the link between personal biography and the biographies of possessions. This allows a single object to represent a commodity, a utilitarian object, a secular souvenir, and a religious blessing.

CONCLUSIONS

Interpreting material culture in terms of economic and political values, or issues of social status, represents only one aspect of the lives of domestic objects. This thesis represents a departure from this traditional kind of scholarship. By re-evaluating evidence for domestic possessions it provides a fresh perspective and reveals objects in Late Antiquity in terms of personal and cultural meanings, illuminating the relationships between people and their possessions. This research consequently represents a step further towards a more nuanced and realistic comprehension of late antique material culture.

Through the application of object biography and other theoretical approaches tied to the understanding of heirlooms, gifts, and souvenirs, this thesis reveals the way in which personal meaning was created and the types of objects that fulfilled these roles. This focus allows the consideration of lower status home and non-elite material culture, as such values are not specific to a certain class. Furthermore, it allows the meaning of objects throughout their lifespans to be drawn out and discussed. Overall, this research has placed an emphasis on the private meanings of objects that is often overlooked. Thus, through its unique approach, it provides an awareness of the full trajectories of possessions, considering both the 'before' and 'after' of an object's life beyond the moment at which we encounter it within the evidence. This contrasts with the more usual interpretations based upon the 'single snapshots' of a moment in the life of the object that the evidence often provides, and allows for the appreciation of multiple meanings for personal possessions. My research has also revealed problems within contemporary scholarship, especially relating to unhelpful terminology or the anachronistic use of categories. This is associated with the fact that at present there is no real framework in which to assess late antique evidence for personal scales of meaning and values, thus uncritical use of terms such as heirloom or souvenir is common. This thesis therefore also represents a viable approach to the evidence in future investigations of this kind.

This thesis will now conclude by summarising the key findings from each chapter. Discussion will then focus on what these results can tell us about life in late antique society more broadly, and the

role of material culture within it. Common themes linking the four main chapters will be identified and considered, before the findings of this thesis are applied in an imaginative exercise in reconstructing a late antique home. Finally, the potential for further research will be discussed.

HEIRLOOMS

This study has shown that heirlooms in late antique society could take almost any form, and that they were not restricted to one level of society. Despite the difficulties with the nature of the evidence, outlined in chapters 1 and 3, preliminary conclusions surrounding the lives of heirlooms within late antique society can be made. This thesis has shown that heirlooms were created in a number of distinct ways. This could firstly occur through the movement of objects between individuals within a family, often at significant and liminal social occasions such as marriage and death.[745] Heirlooms alternatively could also be created via lengthy curation within a domestic context, which provided the opportunity for the accumulation of memories. For example, contexts within the home such as storage or the domestic shrine allowed the extended preservation and static use or display of domestic material culture, with meanings associated with family identity and memory collecting as a consequence.

The identification of such contexts also reveals that heirlooms represented a very broad spectrum in terms of value and use. This is because the existence of heirlooms is dependent the capacity of material culture to store memories, and thus evoke previous owners and familial heritage.[746] This ability is common to all objects; therefore by extension any item of material culture can become redolent of past familial experiences and ancestors and thus become an heirloom. Consequently, both objects explicitly intended to become heirlooms, and objects whose heirloom status has developed as a by-product of continued family ownership can be identified within the evidence. 'Purpose-made' heirlooms, especially in the form of jewellery and dining ware, are particularly prominent; their heirloom status can often be identified through iconography or inscriptions.[747]

[745] For example, the *maniaces* necklace given as dowry in P.Oxy.10.1273, or the domestic objects bequeathed in the fourth-century Centurion's will (P.Col.7.188). See chapter 3, section III.
[746] Chapter 2, section III.1.
[747] For example, the inscription on the Sevso Treasure's Hunting Plate is explicit about its heirloom status; the 'marriage' portrait on the Projecta Casket combined with the variety of monograms suggests an heirloom. See chapter 3, section II.1.

Often there is a relationship between high value possessions and heirlooms. This is likely a reflection of a conscious, or otherwise, desire to connect an object's material value with the intangible worth of personal meanings that is inherent within heirlooms. However, the interpretation of lower value objects as heirlooms is also possible. Documentary evidence such as wills and receipts from the papyri record the transmission of more ordinary objects, all of which had the potential to function as heirlooms. For example, the domestic objects listed in the fourth-century receipt of a deceased's possessions are distinctly everyday in nature, however their biographies nevertheless mean they have the capacity to become heirloom objects.[748] Thus, this thesis has revealed that heirlooms were not exclusively precious objects associated with the elite. In fact it seems that many heirloom objects were explicitly personal possessions closely connected with the identities of their previous owners, for example the clothing of Junius Messalla or the jewellery found in dowries. Whilst many of these examples are associated with high status individuals, they are most significantly wearable personal possessions, whose physical interaction with their owners enhances their evocative capabilities.[749] This creation and evocation of meaning and memory is relevant to all personal possessions, regardless of value or status. Similarly, this thesis has also revealed that texts of varying kinds, both documentary and literary, had the potential to behave as heirlooms just as any other kind of material culture could. Private letters and important documents could be kept within household archives, like that of Dioscorus, travelling through generations of the same family and exhibiting a complex web of meanings and values.[750]

One of the main evidential problems that appears within the archaeological evidence is our (in)ability to positively identify older objects as heirlooms. This is especially true of potentially anomalous older objects in grave contexts. These are often items that represent unlikely material survivals due to their intrinsically fragile nature – see for example the glass cup discussed in chapter 3, section II.1, and the pottery discussed in section II.2. Such occurrences have variously been interpreted as the disinterment of old objects from nearby graves which are then reburied, although in this thesis I have also argued for the potential curation of such items within specific

[748] P.Oxy.14.1645.
[749] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961). P.Oxy.10.1273.
[750] See chapter 3, section III.5. Also MacCoull (1988).

domestic contexts either through storage or because of their heirloom status.[751] However, perhaps the disinterment and reuse of older objects that were *not* heirlooms represents a broader understanding of the social value of ancestral possessions. To seek out older objects from beyond the family's own domestic material culture for burial as grave goods can be interpreted as an acknowledgment of contemporary practices related to heirlooms as grave goods. The age of the objects acquired and reinterred might represent the values embodied by heirlooms, even if the specific object is not in fact an heirloom of the deceased. Instead the found objects represent these meanings, usually conferred through the biography of an heirloom, via other means such as the physical age of the item and its material appearance. As such, these older pseudo-heirloom objects might still function to convey a sense of genealogical legitimacy in the form of a material symbol.

Such an interpretation could link more broadly to the presence and popularity of antiques during this period.[752] This is something that has already been discussed within this thesis in relation to contemporary understandings of *paideia* and classical education.[753] However, it could also relate to the genealogical legitimacy that heirloom objects convey within the home. Therefore, the presence and display of antique objects, with noticeable signs of age or antiquated in style might be favoured as communicators of the same sense of heritage and familial continuity as an authentic heirloom would. This certainly ties into contemporary cultural ideals associated with family lineage and ancestry. Issues surrounding genealogical authenticity can be identified culturally through traditional links to foundation myths such as Romulus and Remus, and the imperial tradition of tracing one's origins back through time to mythical progenitors.[754] Such practices are also emphasised within the Bible, where in both the Old and New Testaments, family trees and the family heritage of individuals including Jesus himself are listed.[755] The importance placed upon the role of heirlooms in practices of inheritance is also emphasised within the sources – the description of Messalla's squandering of his heirlooms is tinged with outrage over the disinheritance of his

[751] See chapter 3, section II.
[752] See for example the Aquae Tarbellicae collection of antique statuettes: Santrot (1996). See also chapter 3, section II.1.
[753] See chapter 3, section I.2.
[754] For example, the Julian dynasty's ancestral association with Venus.
[755] See for example Genesis 5 for the descendants of Adam, and Matthew 1 for the genealogy of Jesus.

heirs.[756] Similarly, it is telling that the story of the theft of heirloom gems is used to emphasise the horror at an official's behaviour in John Lydus.[757] Of course, all objects have a value and such expressions likely reflect to a certain extent the loss of material wealth. However, they also reflect more broadly the desirability of the values embodied by heirlooms – heritage, genealogical legitimacy, personal and familial history.

Furthermore, in terms of object use, there is evidence for a traditional cultural emphasis on the evocation of ancestors through material culture. This is can be identified through the continuation of traditions from the earlier Roman period. Homes, in particular of the elite, were closely associated with family ancestry and the display of heritage and lineage.[758] Traditionally heirloom portrait busts displayed within Roman houses would evoke the presence of ancestors and affirm the genealogical authenticity of the current inhabitants, being passed down through generations of aristocratic families into the late antique period.[759] Their existence is referred to in the sixth-century legal code of Justinian, and the writings of the fifth- to sixth-century aristocrat Boethius.[760] Therefore the presence of objects representing past ancestors and the heritage of a house's inhabitants would certainly have been familiar in domestic space during this period. Other evidence also suggests that the home was considered the ideal place to advertise your personal lineage in Late Antiquity. Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, son of the fourth-century orator, is recorded via an inscription as creating a gallery of ancestral statues to honour both his own and his wife's family.[761] On a smaller scale, such evidence can be compared to that investigated within this thesis to show similar practices: the Sevso Hunting Plate explicitly refers to ancestors through its inscription, and the portrait medallions discussed in chapter 4 would similarly evoke the specific identities of past generations if inherited. Furthermore, the ability for objects to evoke memories and previous owners through their biography allows the identification of heirlooms outside of the elite social stratum – thus jewellery, dining ware, and clothing can still be understood as evoking ancestors for those who have knowledge of the biography of the object.

[756] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961).
[757] John Lydus, *Mag.* 3.59; trans. Bandy (1983).
[758] See Flower (1996) on the role of ancestor masks within Roman houses, and Hillner (2003) on the role of houses in late antique Roman senatorial families.
[759] Flower (1996) 264-269.
[760] Boethius *Con.* 1 prose 1.3; trans. Relihan (2001). See also Flower (1996) 264-267.
[761] ILS 2947. See also Hillner (2003) 133.

This thesis has also considered evidence for the transmission of heirlooms between individuals within families. This has shown that the majority of these behaviours involved small scale objects. Furthermore, many of these possessions were associated with women, as were many of the contexts in which transmission between generations occurred. Therefore, a link can be determined more specifically between types of heirloom object and socially constructed gender roles. Within the sources, we see that women feature prominently in the transmission of heirlooms within families. The natural bias of dowry and marriage documents has already been mentioned.[762] Notably however, none of the sources quoted in chapter 3 represent objects moving exclusively between men. The closest to such a scenario is the inheritance of the centurion's possessions by his brothers, but even these are not designated as exclusively theirs, but rather to be split equally between themselves and the female relatives.[763] Perhaps this evidence represents a difference in the kinds of objects passed between family members of different genders. The majority of the heirloom objects found within these sources can be described as domestic in nature – and the home was traditionally the woman's realm. Furthermore, many of these objects can be interpreted as female possessions, and represent traditions of giving between women of the same family. This is especially the case for jewellery, which was deemed suitable for transmission between relatives as dowries, wedding gifts, and family heirlooms.

The kinds of possessions not represented within the texts relate to the ownership of houses, land, and slaves. Were these to be inherited by men? Property and land are immoveable and as such can be difficult to divide up between relatives. In contrast, moveable property – such as domestic possessions and personal clothing and jewellery – can be distributed amongst a number of heirs relatively easily. The inheritance of such objects is also more suitable to the traditional movement of women within late antique society. Families grow and change, with members joining and leaving the central unit through events such as birth, marriage and death. When a woman married, she usually left her family home to join her husband as they began their own family.[764] In such

[762] See chapter 3, section IV.3.
[763] P.Col.7.188.
[764] The movement of the bride to her husband-to-be's home on the day of marriage is emphasised in the Digest of Justinian. See *Dig. Jus*. 23.2.5, 35.1.15; trans. Watson (1985).

circumstances, moveable property such as that listed in chapter 3 are the most suitable to give her to begin her new life. They are also symbolic of the continuation of the lineage she left in material form. As moveable property, heirlooms allowed the continued presence of family members and genealogical heritage in new locations and sets of circumstances.

It has already been mentioned that this chapter represents new scholarship in terms of assessing evidence for the presence of heirlooms, and that as part of this research, problems relating to the nature of the sources have been identified. Problems arise from the fact that, whilst heirlooms are by necessity curated over time, much of the evidence reflects only precise moments in the lives of objects. For example, references within texts to the inheritance of objects identifies the moment that meaning can be created – namely the moment of an object's transition from one generation to another within a family.[765] However, such primary sources usually do not give information on the lives of objects before or after this action. The consequence of this is that it is impossible to be sure of the presence of heirlooms within a textual source unless the moment in which meaning is created is shown. The same can be said for archaeological evidence. The identification of an older object within an excavation context is reliant upon the dependability of dating techniques, which may not always prove to be accurate.[766]

There can also be issues with the identification of heirlooms by secondary sources. Although heirloom material may be recognised and identified within contemporary scholarship, a full consideration of the significance of this evidence and what this status means in terms of the contemporary understandings of the object is not always given. For example, Bruhn's study of numismatic jewellery does identify certain examples as containing coins older than their mount, and highlights the reference in the *Digest of Justinian* that ancient coins could be bequeathed as legacies within families.[767] However despite this, the focus of discussion remains on the role of such jewellery as preserving the coins' bullion value, and its decorative function, rather than exploring the personal and cultural meanings of these heirlooms objects. By ignoring these important aspects of the possession, the full spectrum of reasons for the incorporation of coins into

[765] For example the Centurion's will: P.Col.7.188.
[766] See chapter 1, section II.
[767] Bruhn (1993) 1. *Dig. Jus.* 7.1.28; trans. Watson (1985).

jewellery, and their role as heirlooms within families, are not considered, inevitably limiting the discussion.

GIFTS

This thesis has shown that gift giving was an extensive feature of life in late antique society, and that it occurred in a variety of contexts in all levels of society. Gifts were given on a range of occasions, or *ad hoc* as a general gesture of sociality. In terms of occasion, gift giving behaviour is recorded in the sources as coinciding with major life events, in particular marriage and birthdays, or alternatively at more communal occasions, specifically festivals. For personal occasions, gifts of often high quality domestic objects are notable. For example, silverware especially associated with dining or the toilet feature in the evidence, along with jewellery and items of food and drink.[768] There seems to be a connection between the high value of the objects in material form, and the important meaning of occasions such as weddings – much in the same way as seen for high value heirlooms, discussed above. As such, the exchange of gifts and the objects themselves work to emphasise the significance of the events. Similarly, imperial gift giving is found extensively within the source materials and often commemorates specific imperial anniversaries. This can be interpreted as much the same sort of behaviour as witnessed for gift giving on anniversaries, weddings, and other such occasions by ordinary people within the late antique period. The act of imperial gift giving, combined with the often high status gifts, such as silverware, similarly functions to distinguish the event and emphasise its importance. The high value of imperial gifts furthermore functioned to honour the recipient, and also had a practical role in supplementing the wages of soldiers during this period.[769]

However, this thesis has demonstrated that for most events, lower value objects were also available as gifts – often representing this behaviour outside of the social elites. Objects such as gold glass vessels with portrait busts could be given as wedding gifts and represent attractive yet reasonably cheap objects, as the amount of gold used was little and the decoration often crudely executed.[770]

[768] Several of these items feature as gifts in Ausonius' *epithalamium* poem: Auson. *Cent. Nupt.* 17.5; trans. Evelyn White (1919). See also wine as a wedding gift: SB 14.12077.
[769] See discussion in chapter 4, section III.1.
[770] For example, the vessel base in fig. 25, and discussed in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

Even for imperial gifts, there appear to be a range of levels of quality and value, with grand silver *missoria* being recreated in glass, and likely other materials too, to provide gifts of a cheaper value.[771] Gifts recorded in the sources as being exchanged at traditional festivals, such as the Kalends, were usually of a standard form such as gold coins or gilded fruit, and represent a smaller financial outlay per gift object – although it seems likely that other more personalised and potentially higher value gifts would have been exchanged between closer individuals.[772] For other celebrations such as Easter, there appears a definite correlation between the kind of object given (seemingly religious texts) and the event itself.[773] The evidence relating to festival gifts demonstrates that this common behaviour ensured the homogeneity of the community participating in the event; furthermore in cases such as gift exchange between disparate Christians at Easter it served to unite the community through material culture.

Thus it is clear that there is an emphasis on the use of material culture via gift giving as a social tool within Late Antiquity – this thesis has demonstrated that material culture was used extensively to create and maintain relationships between individuals on all levels. As such, this activity can be considered as both meaningful and pragmatic– this is certainly the case in part for imperial gifts, which were distributed to ensure diplomatic relationships were maintained.[774] Such uses have also been shown to exist in the lower levels of society, for example in the papyrus letter that requests lenient taxation from a customs house and is accompanied by unidentified gifts to apparently sweeten the deal.[775] This use of gift objects is reliant upon a sense of necessary reciprocity, as discussed by the key gift theorists Mauss and Gregory.[776] When placed in this context, this thesis has shown that the act of giving gifts in the late antique period worked to create mutual obligations between individuals, often for political ends, and also demonstrated adherence to dominant social

[771] For example, the fragment of a large glass plate that features iconography found on other imperial platters: Oliver (1975) 70.
[772] See chapter 4, section II.2 of this thesis.
[773] For example, Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. 4*; trans. Silvas (2007).
[774] Such as those between Justinian and the queen of the Sabir Huns: Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.13; trans. Jeffreys, *et al.* (1986).
[775] P.Oxy.16.1872.
[776] For full discussion, see chapter 2, section III.3.

conventions. This is referred to directly in the source material – one papyri letter states that making return wedding gifts is the right thing to do.[777]

Gift giving is an essential part of social and political interaction in any society, and it was certainly a common practice in the earlier Roman period, where it was also used for maintaining connections and obligations between parties. Euergetism, or private donation for public benefit, was a feature of Greek and Roman society. It saw the most well-off fund civic projects for the benefit of society, in return for prestige, status and loyalty.[778] Many of these features are recognisable outcomes of the gift giving we witness in late antique sources. Furthermore, the patronage system, a key feature of earlier Roman society and which saw high status individuals support lower status clients through material means and social influence was still active in the late antique period.[779]

A link can also be drawn between politically motivated gift exchange and its use in maintaining relationships within families and communities. The papyrological evidence reveals that gift giving on a low level and frequent scale was a naturalized behaviour within family groups. Private letters often feature the movement of quite ordinary objects between individuals, especially in terms of food and drink which can be interpreted as symbolising care and affection.[780] Gifted objects can embody their donor and maintain connections between giver and recipient, something that is enhanced should the gifts also be handmade, as can be seen in relation to examples of clothing in the papyrological sources.[781]

The truth of such an interpretation is further enhanced if we consider inheritance to also represent gift giving between generations of a family. Thus it is plausible that other contexts of gift exchange in late antiquity sought to create the same effect. For example, imperial donation can be interpreted as a method to create a surrogate family in which the same kinds of loyalties and strength of ties

[777] P.Flor.3.332.
[778] Much has been written on this topic, notably by Veyne (1990), and Lomas & Cornell (2003).
[779] Both Bagnall and Brown discuss the role of patronage in late antique society. See Brown (1992) 35-70, and Bagnall (1993) 214-229.
[780] See for example P.Benaki 4.
[781] P.Oxy. 56.3860. Homemade gifts represent a specific form of meaning in which the identity of the maker is intrinsically tied to the object through the manufacturing process – see discussion in chapter 2, section III.3.i.

was emulated. Such a practice certainly seems to have been used to create networks and inculcate individuals into specific cultural traditions. For example, the sending of letters and the exchanging of gifts at Easter strengthened a Christian community that was geographically diverse – something emphasised by Jerome's exhortation for the recipient to "call to mind the friend in whom you delight".[782] Furthermore a focus on religious doctrine within the letters and gifted texts emphasised the values of the community to which the recipients belonged. The importance of letters as a material means of uniting separated individuals has been revealed during the course of this thesis. There was a clear reliance upon material culture in this form in connecting people in Late Antiquity; furthermore the evidence suggests that letters were also considered as gifts by both senders and recipients. Taking this interpretation, letters could thus evoke the presence and identity of their maker, enhanced by their 'handmade' nature as personal written texts. This is referred to explicitly within several extant letters from the period – for example Jerome in the fourth century states he will find his friend, "present in absence through an interchange of letters."[783] Thus letters also functioned to provide a surrogate presence for absent individuals – this is something that can be discussed in relation to late antique material culture more broadly, and will be explored further below.

This reliance upon gifts as maintaining relationships makes it tempting to state that the prominence of this activity within late antique society is symptomatic of a period in which the movement of people was relatively common.[784] Certainly terms such as the Migration Period suggest large-scale movements of people into the Empire, a context in which the benefits of gift giving in securing community identities and loyalties seems clear. However, it is unclear whether movement during this period was as extensive as previous scholarship has suggested; in fact arguments and interpretations of the so-called Migration Period remains a contentious issue in late antique studies.[785] Nonetheless, whilst perhaps not unique to this period, there is still extensive evidence revealing that late antique travel was by no means uncommon.[786]

[782] Jerome, *Ep.* 71.7; trans. Fremantle (1893).
[783] Jerome, *Ep.* 71.7; trans. Fremantle (1893).
[784] For a further discussion of travel in Late Antiquity see chapter 5, section I.1 of this thesis.
[785] A good overview of the relevant arguments and scholarship is provided by Maas (2012) 73-74.
[786] See chapter 5. Also Handley (2011).

In addition, changes within the administration of the empire also suggest the movement of people both long and short term that would necessitate the use of material culture to maintain relationships. Peter Brown, in agreement with A.H.M. Jones, states that during Late Antiquity imperial administration became enormously centralised, with power and decision-making retained within the central nucleus of government.[787] This weakened many provincial cities both economically and culturally, in favour of the central power seat at Constantinople.[788] Thus in order to access officials within the imperial chain of command, late antique citizens would likely need to travel more often, and potentially further. Delegates from the provinces would visit the main administrative centres for audiences with the imperial inner circle, requiring travel to access the true seat of power.[789] The archive of Dioscorus records such behaviour, with documentary texts indicating the lawyer travelled from Egypt to Constantinople for such an audience, in order to petition against changes in local tax collection.[790] Increased movement for official reasons such as this would consequently lead to an increased reliance upon methods of staying in contact with loved ones and communities, namely gift exchange.

In addition, such governmental developments are likely also a factor in the level of imperial gifting witnessed in the source material. As Brown explains, many studies focus on the emperor as sole ruler, however this vast power had to be mediated through his representatives as he was almost always an impossible distance from the majority of his subjects.[791] Thus the giving of imperial gifts was crucial in an environment where relations of power were stretched to a maximum. Johansen states that it was only within the late antique period that a codified system of gifts featuring the image of the emperor or associated inscriptions began to develop; similarly consular gifts only appear during this period too.[792] This can be understood as a response to this centralisation of power; gifts were a necessary method of forging alliances with subjects through gift giving in an empire that covered such a large territory. The same interpretation can also be drawn for the local imperial representatives themselves; certainly provincial governors were keen to make allies

[787] Brown (1992) 10. Jones (1986) vol. 1, 403.
[788] Haldon (1999) 2.
[789] Brown (1992) 11.
[790] P.Cair.Masp.I 67032; P. Cair.Masp.I. 67024-67025. See also MacCoull (1988) 1, 10-11.
[791] Brown (1992) 9.
[792] Johansen (1994) 224.

locally to support their positions due to the tenuous connection between themselves and the emperor.[793] In this light, the smaller gifts by lesser officials, such as the *quaestor* diptychs and the bowls distributed by Symmachus can be interpreted as a direct result of the changes in the dynamics and distribution of imperial power.[794]

Moreover, the use of gifts can also represent a movement towards reward-based loyalty that can be seen in the warring tribal societies on the edges of the empire, such as the Goths, Huns and Alarics, and which flourished after the end of the Roman Empire in the West. These bands of warriors were held together by trust, faith and loyalty to a single leader.[795] In such a system, gift giving provides an important method to retain power and support from troops and subjects. It also reflects the similar emphasis on material culture and the evocation of family ties explored in relation to heirloom objects. This reliance on loyalty as a base of power is closely associated with the decoration and design of many late antique gift objects, which function to distinguish both donors and recipients from other members of society. Imperial or consular gifts with recognizable iconography or inscriptions, such as the Missorium of Theodosius (fig. 30) become symbolic objects – they are visible signs of the owner's membership of a group. In such circumstances, the donor is giving not only material gifts but also an identity to the recipient. This is especially true in relation to highly visible objects, such as the belts, rings, and brooches discussed by Johansen, similar to the ring inscribed with VIRTVS MILITVM in fig. 33.[796] These gifts become outward signs of belonging. Therefore, not only does the imperial donor create a loyalty-based community through the act of giving, but strengthens it through the lasting effect of the object itself. Objects of display linked with consuls or emperors communicate messages of allegiance to viewers and promote the image of the emperor independently of his initial gifting action. This continued social action is thanks to the agency of the objects – their material form continues to communicate meaning after the initial exchange.

[793] Brown (1992) 15.
[794] Symmachus, *Ep. 7.76*; trans. Callu (1995).
[795] Shaw (1999) 158.
[796] Johansen (1994).

Evidence relating to gift giving behaviour and associated material culture represents a topic subjected to extensive study in previous research. This is especially true in relation to elite and imperial gifts. However the expanded focus of this present study shows that similar behaviours were present throughout society. In addition, a range of material culture was available for gift giving for those of lesser financial means. It confirms the role of gifted objects as political and social tools based in scales of reciprocity. Yet this study also reveals the reliance upon gift exchange in maintaining social relationships, and its importance in a society that experienced increased mobility and social change. Furthermore, when reviewed in this way, the evidence discussed here provides an excellent comparison for the work on other meaningful objects within this thesis, revealing common trends in the use of material culture that defy categorisation and represent broader behavioural tendencies.

SOUVENIRS

In contrast to previous studies that have focused solely on holy relics, this thesis has shown that both secular and religious souvenirs were produced and purchased throughout the period of Late Antiquity. The evidence reveals that souvenirs were either purpose-made objects intended to provoke memories of the place or event commemorated, or other more ordinary objects taken as personal mementoes. Purpose-made souvenirs often featured iconography, inscriptions or an implicit function or behaviour that represented their place of origin and the experience of the traveller. For example, the Pharos bottle (fig. 41) and the charioteer glass (fig. 46) represent objects that materially evoke a specific place or event through their decoration. However, Theophane's Silenus water jar and the mentions of textiles from Skinepeous in documentary papyri represent examples of 'foreign' or regional material culture.[797] This thesis has also shown that food could function as souvenirs – the aroma and textures of food have the ability to powerfully evoke memories associated with other places and experiences.[798] Regional specialities are certainly known and referred to within papyrological sources, such as the Canopic cakes presumably associated with the Alexandrian suburb of Canopus.[799] Thus, despite Weiner's assertion that food represents an ineffectual inalienable object, its capacity to be replicated in terms of the physical

[797] P.Ryl.630; P.Princ.2.82.
[798] See chapter 5, section II.2.
[799] SB 8.9746 = SB 3.7243.

experience of eating means that food and drink could well evoke other places and previous encounters through their materiality, as more conventional souvenirs could.[800] In addition, other objects that had no explicit external signifiers highlighting their place of origin could be purchased as souvenirs; their association with this location would thus only be known to those familiar with the object's biography, thus their ability to evoke this information would be to a limited audience. This range of objects corresponds to Stewart's categories of souvenirs of either 'external sights', or 'samples'.[801] The same categorisations can be used for the religious souvenirs discussed within chapter 5. Certain objects were made explicitly to function as pilgrim souvenirs, evoking their place of origin and its spirituality through their material form – see for example the glass jug from Jerusalem depicting a monumental cross (fig. 57), and the Menas *ampullae* decorated with the image of the saint associated with the location (fig. 55). Other Christian souvenirs however were neutral, ephemeral substances or pieces of local material culture that would be unidentifiable to anyone who did not know their biography – oil and water were popular as material blessings, seen in the soil taken from the Holy Sepulchre or the foot washing water requested in the Coptic letter, discussed in chapter 6.[802]

There are other clear similarities between religious and secular souvenir objects. Both kinds when placed within formal structures of meaning rely upon collective memories of places and events. The Pharos jug (fig. 41) was shown to use recognisable imagery to convey that location effectively, even to people who may not have seen it first hand. Similarly, Christian souvenirs rely upon familiar iconography, such as scenes from the Bible (see for example the Sancta Sanctorum box, fig. 53) in order to communicate their significance. As such, both of these kinds of souvenirs are using communal knowledge of specific sights, stories and events to visually communicate their biographical origin.

Furthermore, both Christian and secular souvenirs had metonymic functions, in which they represented a greater whole through their partial representation of their place or event of origin. For example, the depiction of the victorious charioteer Vincentius and his horse (fig. 46) represents the

[800] Weiner (1992) 38.
[801] Stewart (1993) 138. See also discussion in chapter 2, section III.2.
[802] Piacenza Pilgrim 171.18; trans. Wilkinson (1977). P.Mich.Copt.8.

whole chariot-racing event for which the object was purchased. Similarly, the seafront scene of Puteoli on the Prague Flask (fig. 40) represents the entire town at which the object was acquired. Likewise, with Christian souvenirs, the image of Theodosius' stepped cross on the small glass jug represents the entire holy site at Jerusalem (fig. 57), whilst the earth of the pilgrim token from Syria (fig. 54) symbolises the complete pilgrimage site from which it originates. In terms of iconography used on souvenirs, at first sight it seems that depictions of physical places or monuments correspond to secular souvenirs – for example the seaside scenes from Puteoli and Baiae, and the image of the Pharos from Alexandria – whereas religious souvenirs depict people, narratives and symbols, for example the Jewish jug decorated with a menorah or the Menas *ampullae* featuring the saint in the *orans* position. However, this reflects more what we might expect to see, rather than what the evidence itself shows. The aforementioned glass jug from Jerusalem shows the stepped cross from Golgotha – certainly a religious symbol but also a monumental feature from a specific location. Similarly, the decoration on the Monza-Bobbio flasks feature such detailed representations of the buildings in Jerusalem that they relate to the reality of the architecture.[803] Furthermore, secular souvenirs also feature the kinds of iconography seen in 'typical' religious souvenirs. The glass vessel base of Orfitus and Constantius includes the figure of Hercules (fig. 25), potentially symbolising the town of Acerentia, which held a shrine to him. The dish from Otañes features individuals enacting the bathing process (fig. 39), rather than depicting the site itself. As such, souvenirs can be seen as drawing on a wide ranging but universal visual language in order to convey their origin and significance as objects through material means. However, Christian souvenirs often have an emphasis on visual narrative and individual characters. This is likely a reflection that much of Christian iconography from this period is drawn from a textual source, the Bible, thereby ensuring that narrative depictions are common. The inclusion of other visual elements, such as realistic architectural details, shows a lineage from other more conventional souvenir objects from the period.

By focusing on a comparison between Christian and secular souvenirs, there is naturally an emphasis on Christian evidence. There is also a significant bias within secondary sources towards Christian evidence. As such, the increase in evidence for souvenirs relating to Christianity in Late

[803] Ainalov (1961) 240-242.

Antiquity can be in part associated with scholarly trends rather than a representative view of all the evidence available. I acknowledge that this present research is guilty of the same bias, by focusing on Christian material culture in its attempt to compare different kinds of souvenirs from the same period. However, by comparing the familiar Christian evidence with less studied 'secular' souvenirs, we can see that overall the two groups had more in common than the distinctive categories they are assigned might suggest; they clearly have similar functions and capabilities as each other. This in itself is an important thing to acknowledge, as it suggests that by ignoring other types of evidence, there is the creation and sustainment of artificial segregations between object types. Thus this thesis has presented the beginnings of a holistic approach to material souvenirs from Late Antiquity.

Furthermore, the increase within textual and archaeological sources for Christian souvenir objects could also be due to the increase in development of *loca sancta* and Christian pilgrimage, providing more opportunities for the acquisition of souvenirs. In addition, it seems clear that the creation of souvenirs in the late antique period was a continuation of traditions witnessed in the earlier Roman era, identifiable through the presence in the archaeological record of objects such as the Rudge Cup and the miniature bottles depicting Artemis.[804] To understand this as developing simply into Christian and secular souvenirs though is a misleading interpretation. Jewish souvenirs, briefly mentioned in chapter 5, also existed however are beyond the scope of this research. Furthermore, there were also pilgrimages to pagan temples, with textual sources revealing the purchase of objects at such sites. This is shown by the Archive of Theophanes, in which he is recorded as buying a gilded imperial statue for apparent dedication in the temple at Ascalon.[805] Similarly, there are the silver miniature shrines from Ephesus mentioned by St Paul in the Bible.[806] Often these objects were dedicated as votive gifts within a temple; despite the prohibition on sacrifice this ritual activity is witnessed through huge deposits of intact votive lamps left by visitors to the destroyed site of the Temple of Asklepieion on Corinth up to the mid-sixth century.[807]

[804] See chapter 5, section I.
[805] P.Ryl.627, verso i, 214.
[806] *Acts* 19:24-27. See chapter 5, section III, n. 525.
[807] Rothaus (2000) 48-49.

This leaving of votive gifts provides a different trajectory for objects compared to the many Christian pilgrim souvenirs we see being taken home and curated within domestic space.[808] However again, further interrogation of the evidence suggests similarities in the treatment of objects and behaviour that can unite these supposedly disparate souvenir types. Certain pagan objects could be installed in the household shrine for domestic veneration, as seems likely happened with the figurines of Artemis from Ephesus (fig. 51). Secondly, Christians also left objects at holy sites, as votive gifts in hope of, or thanks for, healing and as signs of devotion. This is clear from the Piacenza Pilgrim's description of the ornaments decorating the rock outside the Holy Sepulchre.[809]

In this light the behaviours relating to souvenirs appear more homogenous, rather than distinct. Perhaps the evidence of Christian souvenirs represents the continuation and modification of traditions witnessed within the practices of pagan worship, both in terms of the taking and leaving of material culture from holy sites. This would certainly accord with the continuation of other practices from earlier Roman times, such as pre-Christian pilgrimage and incubation at holy sites.[810] Thus the material evidence of sacred souvenirs represents continuity in terms of behaviours and religious practices during times of religious change. Such cultural developments can be witnessed beyond the sphere of material culture; Haas describes how traditional astrologers in late antique Alexandria continued to practice, but within a Christianised context.[811] Thus the continuation of practices relating to the use and meaning of material culture likely also continued, as demonstrated by the evidence of souvenirs, but within a Christianised structure of meaning.

There is however a definite focus in the late antique period on the materiality of souvenir objects, something clearly demonstrated by the emphasis on the senses in early Christian souvenirs. Souvenirs relating to Christian worship explicitly used their material nature to convey sanctity and concepts relating to the spiritual. Thus *ampullae* and reliquaries contained actual material substances from the *loca sancta* to communicate the intangible power of God through physical

[808] Augustine, *City of God* 22.8; trans. Dods (1956).
[809] Piacenza Pilgrim 18; trans. Wilkinson (1977).
[810] For example, the Temple of Asclepius complex at Pergamon had a specific incubation building for pilgrims to sleep in. Hoffman (1998) 54.
[811] Haas (1997) 152.

contact. The imagery of souvenir objects, such as the Menas Ampulla in fig. 55, is decorated with the figure of the saint despite the fact that he would not actually be seen on a visit to the site. The portability of such material objects allowed the experience of the pilgrim to continue away from the location, rather than relying upon the veneration at the specific site. This is of course in part the purpose of souvenirs – to evoke experiences and places in material form. However, this distinct increase in emphasis on physical experience can be directly related to what Cox Miller describes as the 'material turn' in late antique Christianity, represented by an increased focus on the role of the body in the perception and comprehension of the holy.[812] As such these objects can be seen as symptomatic of the late antique period, and allows them to be placed within a broader context. The wearability of many of the late antique Christian souvenirs, particularly the handled *ampullae*, prefigure later Byzantine traditions of the wearing of relics and blessed substances within *enkolpia* and pectoral crosses. They also emphasise the importance placed upon the physical interaction between human bodies and sacred souvenir objects in the early Christian belief system.

By considering both the sacred and secular souvenirs of this chapter as one object group, this thesis has shown that material culture could evoke places as effectively as people.[813] Thus material culture functioned to make the world smaller – bringing places and people closer and giving the owner of the object simultaneous ownership of the people or places evoked. These objects also show that the fact of having travelled – whether it be for business, pleasure, or religious reasons - was an important part of the souvenir owners' personal identity. As such, we can read these objects as representing pride, curiosity and a desire to prolong the experience embodied in the taking and display of souvenirs. This is as true for Christian objects as secular; they function outwardly to communicate to others as well as reflecting a relationship between person and place, and person and object.

BASKETS

It is clear that baskets functioned as meaningful auxiliary objects as part of a broader visual and symbolic language during Late Antiquity. However it has also been demonstrated that baskets had

[812] Cox Miller (2009) 3-7.
[813] The evocation of people by objects is discussed in chapter 2, section III.4; chapter 3, section IV; chapter 4, section IV.

the ability to be standalone possessions that held specific meanings and consequently values; for example, there is a definite connection between the *kalathos* style basket, the act of spinning, and notions of late antique femininity.[814] Furthermore the trend for their inclusion within decorative schemes can be associated with images of plenty and agricultural success, as well as specific pagan deities such as Isis.[815] Thus baskets can be identified as both practical and culturally significant objects during this period. By focusing on the evidence of monastic baskets, this thesis has further underlined the way in which objects can embody multiple meanings and move between statuses such as gift, heirloom and souvenir during the late antique period. This case study provided a single context in which the themes and trends discussed elsewhere within this thesis could be identified and discussed further. It also provided the opportunity for new interpretations of meaningful objects, and allowed significant features invisible in other sources of evidence to come to the fore, which will be summarised below.

The evidence from both the early monastic texts and the archaeological record in Egypt demonstrates that baskets were valuable objects in several ways. Firstly, their production provided an income for the monks of late antique Egypt, and thus represented a pragmatic commodity of economic worth, as discussed by Wipszycka and referred to directly in the primary textual sources.[816] Secondly, they also had a practical function within the monastic environment in terms of containing and carrying other objects.[817] Thirdly, they had a complex layering of meanings for both the monks themselves and those beyond their religious communities – something that this thesis explores in depth for the first time. The baskets the monks made had meaning in terms of religious practice – they are recorded as aiding the monks' pursuit of spiritual contemplation and providing psychological strength during their ascetic lifestyles.[818] The emphasis here is on the value arising from the process of manufacture; it has been argued in this thesis that this results from from the actions embodied by the creation itself. The nature of basket making means that there are

[814] See chapter 6, section II.1.
[815] See chapter 6, section II.2 & II.3.
[816] Wipszycka (2009) 479. *AP* Sisoes 16; trans. Ward (1984).
[817] This also extended into contexts of reuse, seen in the splitting of baskets to be used as a covering for bodies during burial. See Winlock (1926) 50.
[818] The making of baskets allowed the act of continual prayer – see chapter 6, section III.2. John Cassian describes 'manual labour' as essential in avoiding *accidie*: John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.1; trans. Waddell (1998).

many repetitions of bodily actions, which create rhythms of movement through the lengthy process. Such repetitive behaviour can be understood as an aid to prayer, helping to focus the mind. It can also aid the effectiveness of the working method itself, allowing it to take on a meditative quality. Similarities can be found in other cultures that reinforce the role of rhythmic movement or behaviour in relation to manual labour.[819] The practical nature and aid of a rhythm whilst conducting repetitive tasks is discussed in relation to the British Isles in more modern times via the work songs that were a feature of small scale industry and homeworkers – activities that involved work songs included spinning, weaving, sailing and agricultural tasks, amongst others.[820] Thus there is a distinct relationship between repetitive rhythms, the process of manufacture, and the focusing of the mind that lends itself to creating a distinct value for the process of making monastic baskets.

The process of making has not before been considered in terms of personal meaning and its effect on finished objects in Late Antiquity. In Ingold's discussion of the 'textility' of making, he explains how our modern understanding of objects often focuses, incorrectly, on the external imposition of form by the craftsperson during the process of making.[821] In fact, in terms of basket making, the fibres that are woven to create the final object are involved in an active exchange with the movements and body of the maker, allowing the object to grow through the physical dialogue between the two agents.[822] It is not simply the monk who shapes the basket and determines the completed object's form. In terms of meaning, we can therefore also understand the meaning of the object as also stemming directly from the process of making and the dialogue between material and maker. The activities of the monks conducted during the process of basket making, such as religious discussion, meditation or prayer, are a product of the activity itself, determined in part by the nature of the materials and the technique dictated by them. Therefore their position as meaningful objects comes directly from the materiality of baskets and the agency of the material in determining the processes used. The material for baskets – the palm leaf strips – also dictate the

[819] I would like to express my thanks to the two commentators at TRAC 2015 who brought Orcadian work songs to my attention.
[820] Korcynski, *et al* (2013) 35-61. Many of the tasks are exclusively male or exclusively female, which could provide a model to further investigate the rhythms of work within Late Antiquity.
[821] Ingold (2010) 92.
[822] Ingold (2000) 341-342.

length of time taken for manufacture of the basket, and the space required to conduct such an activity. All that is needed is a pile of the raw material, a pot for steeping leaves, and a needle for sewing the plaits; requirements that again stem directly from the nature of the basket-making material. These factors mean that it was not the monks who chose basket making as a suitable activity; the accessibility of palm leaves and the process of manufacture this material consequently dictated instead stimulated the auxiliary activities of prayer, meditation and discussion. Subsequent meanings related to prayer and meditation thus stem from this rather than the intentionality of the monks.

The process of making is an intrinsic part of the biography of the baskets and is especially significant as it is referenced directly through the nature of the object's surface. The movements of the monks are visible in the plaited palm fibre as the patterns are created by their physical actions. This visual sign of production emphasises the physical contact between the basket and the producer, something very important in the creation of material blessings or *eulogiae*. The literary and textual evidence further supports this idea, revealing that monastic products were desirable as pilgrim souvenirs or material blessings.[823] As material symbols, baskets came to represent the 'otherness' of the monastic lifestyle with these objects' meanings understood by people beyond the monastic complexes, alongside the other cultural values held by baskets during this period.[824] However, the importance of baskets as symbolic of the alternative monastic lifestyle seems to stem from the fact that in reality distinctions between life in these religious communities and beyond in ordinary society was not as clearly drawn as the textual sources would suggest. Peter Brown draws the distinction between the figure of the holy man in Syria and the early monks of Egypt. The identity of the early Christian holy man as archetype was not homogeneous, but rather one that held distinct roles in society depending upon the region these individuals lived in. Brown explains that the differences in landscape were the reason for differences between the holy monks of Egypt, who generally lived in organised communities of one form or another, and the holy men of Syria, who were often were outlandish in their ascetic acts. This is epitomised by the story of Symeon the Stylite who lived on top of column as an act of devotion and highly visible enactment of his

[823] P.Mich.Copt.8. Also *AP* Achilles 1; trans. Ward (1984).
[824] See discussion in chapter 6, section IV.1.

separateness from society. The extreme hostility of the Egyptian deserts meant that the monks who chose to live there had to adopt the more conventional lifestyles akin to ordinary Egyptian townsfolk, in terms of reliance of labour and habitable dwellings in order to survive in the harsh environment.[825] Egypt beyond the Nile was mountainous and extremely dry with little vegetation, meaning that even the most ascetic of lifestyles had to be carefully planned and regulated in order for basic survival. Therefore the sense of 'monk as other' was not as distinct in terms of lifestyle when compared to the ordinary people of Egypt. The holy men of Syria could live more extreme lifestyles made possible because of the more habitable environment. Therefore, the Egyptian monks had to draw upon other methods to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. This thesis has drawn a link between the role of baskets as feminine objects and their appropriation by the early Christian monks as a way to mark themselves as outside of conventional society.[826] When viewed in this way, the role of baskets within monastic communities can be interpreted as an important means to further emphasise their difference to mainstream society, which was more difficult to display in their day-to-day lives in other ways.

As well as symbolising the otherness of monks by subverting cultural tropes, baskets can be interpreted as symbols of monastic lives and identities in other ways. As handmade objects they are markers of the identities of their creators.[827] Furthermore these baskets relate directly to the manner in which the monks lived (as a product of labour); their location (through origin of materials and location of manufacture); and their activities (the constant prayer conducted during manufacture). Baskets can also be linked to broader Christian ideals in late antique society. Early Christianity positioned poverty, humility and the equality of men as prime virtues, and these are still recognisable in the modern day as key values of the religion. In the late antique period, this is explicitly discussed in John Chrysostom's *Homily 2 on Hebrews*, in which he states,

> The Christian shines out in poverty rather than in riches. How? He will be less arrogant, more sober-minded, graver, more equitable, more considerate: but he that is in wealth, has many impediments to these things.[828]

[825] Brown (1971) 83.
[826] See chapter 6, section IV.1.
[827] See chapter 2, section III.3.i.
[828] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2 on Hebrews*, 1.5; trans. Gardiner (1889).

There is a clear link between the ideals of poverty and the basket as culturally significant object. Despite the time and effort required to make baskets, they were not considered valuable objects in terms of economic value.[829] Thus they were humble and yet universal possessions; their ubiquity within everyday life ensured everyone would recognise and have been able to relate to them as objects. As objects they underlined the sentiment that you did not have to be rich in material goods to live a fulfilling Christian life. As such, they represented the opposite of elite material culture by instead emphasising ideas of ease of availability and thus equality. In a more specific sense, monastic objects represented the activities of the monks and thus provided in material form an example for others to follow. Embodied in the fabric of the baskets are ideals associated with monastic values of poverty, humility, and hard work in order to overcome sin and live a virtuous Christian lifestyle. All of these factors combine to create domestic objects that chime with the broader values of Christianity.

This chapter represents a brief but important assessment of an overlooked object type; in previous studies on baskets, the meanings embodied by these objects have been ignored. Furthermore, this analysis draws upon a rich textual source that has not been fully exploited with regards to late antique material culture, namely early monastic literature. These texts provide a valuable counterpart to other pieces of evidence on everyday life, allowing comparisons between distinct forms of everyday life. Whilst it is unclear whether the textual evidence provides a realistic representation of life in monastic sites, it does nonetheless demonstrate the reliance on objects as personal and cultural symbols. Furthermore, the evidence it provides in relations to gifts, heirlooms and souvenirs compares favourably with the discussions in the earlier three chapters.

This concluding chapter will now turn to explore common themes that can be identified across the main thematic chapters.

[829] Diocletian's Price Edict lists baskets as 10 denarii according to weight, and various materials as between 6 and 10 though much of the information is missing from this section: *Edict Dioc.* 32:15-26; trans. Graser (1959). Furthermore, the natural materials for basket making could potentially be free if acquired from the plants themselves. The ubiquity of baskets is evidenced by their frequent reference in the papyri record and their appearance in a range of visual media.

Within this thesis, it is possible to identify an emphasis placed on specific behaviour in relation to the creation and maintenance of meaning and memories within domestic objects. One such example is the act of wearing meaningful objects. The evidence collated here demonstrates that certain gift, heirloom, and souvenir objects can be and were worn upon the body. For example, clothing from the description of Junius Messalla is shown to be an heirloom, as are the garments worn by Daniel in the Alphabetical Collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.[830] Jewellery too is often inherited by successive generations of the same family. Souvenirs, such as the *ampullae* and flasks from Christian *loca sancta* can also be worn upon the body, suspended around the neck. This specific behaviour can be explicitly connected to the types of meaning inherent within the objects. The wearing of heirlooms is a method of visual communicating the wearer and object's history – associating the owner with values relating to their ancestry and legitimacy of heritage. It could also have connotations of prestige and status.[831] On a more personal level, the wearing of heirloom objects could provide comfort through the surrogate presence of the wearer's extended and ancestral family, and the reassurance of a familiar object in unpleasant or unfamiliar contexts. Similarly, the wearing of gifts would represent a visible link between the donor and recipient, as well as potentially alluding to their context of acquisition, for example a wedding, in material form. The wearing of souvenirs would likewise make a statement about the experiences of the wearer, since a visit to the place or event the item evokes would be necessary for the object's acquisition. There may also be associated connotations of exoticism, fashion, and prestige.[832] In particular, pilgrim souvenirs were worn for their amuletic function. This stems directly from the belief in the physical communicability of the holy during this period through physical contact. The act of wearing a pilgrim souvenir, in particular those containing relics or samples of the holy land in material form, would mean the object was in constant contact with the body, ensuring maximum efficacy. The wearer would then be assured protection, healing or a blessing.

In particular, heirlooms such as jewellery or clothing can be repeatedly worn by their owners, perhaps on specific occasions or events, and over generations within the same family. This physical

[830] SHA 20.4; trans. Magie (1961). AP Arsenius 42; trans. Ward (1984).
[831] See discussion in chapter 3, section I.2 & in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
[832] See chapter 5, section IV.2.

action both creates and reinforces meaning in these objects. The repeated behaviours echo and perpetuate the actions of earlier members of the family, and creates a closeness between relatives, (some of whom may be absent) through the materiality of the objects. The same interpretation can be argued for the reading and rereading of texts and documents over generations within the same family.[833] These repetitive behaviours, such as the re-reading of texts or wearing of jewellery over successive generations, elicits memories from the wearer and those witnessing the action who are aware of the object's biography. Furthermore, the meanings associated with family and heritage that stem from those memories are reinforced, added to, and thus perpetuated by the repeated action. The role of repeated behaviours can also be found in evidence relating to souvenir objects, as discussed in chapter 5. The functions of objects such as the glass flasks from Puteoli and Baiae, and the iconography on the dish from the spa at Otañes encourages the replication of site specific behaviours – namely the drinking of spa waters and the practices associated with bathing.[834] These objects not only provide a memory of these activities in material form, they allow the replication and continuation of these behaviours away from their original locations, thereby extending the experiences of the owner and providing ownership of the location's identity.

This thesis has also shown that there is evidence relating to the re-enacting of behaviours over longer periods of time and across different families; this potentially demonstrates an awareness of the functions and role of heirloom objects within society, if not a familiarity with the specific personal history and meaning of the object. For example, potential heirloom pottery has been interpreted as being disinterred from graves for reburial with other individuals at a later date at the Eastern Cemetery in London.[835] Similarly, the villa at Lullingstone shows evidence of the reuse of ancestor busts in a household shrine, despite there being no family connection between the objects and the new property owner.[836] These bits of evidence suggest that there was a social recognition of meaningful objects in late antique society, perhaps from their context, which could result in their appropriation for the re-enactment of rituals and behaviours. Such trends can be identified in the medieval period in relation to the veneration of relics. Geary describes how periodically relics

[833] See chapter 3, section III.5.
[834] See chapter 5, section II.1.
[835] Barber & Bowsher (2000) 122; Henig (2005) 158.
[836] See chapter 3, section II.1.

would be lost and rediscovered by the church, thus revitalising them in terms of their spiritual meaning and cult following in the community.[837] Through this continuation of meaningful activities, the value of the objects is perpetuated.

The adherence to social conventions surrounding expected and desired behaviours ensured that gift giving was a behaviour common throughout Late Antiquity on a variety of occasions. Such activity shows that that there were established and approved uses and behaviours surrounding specific examples of material culture during this period. For example, the Theodosian Code under Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius states that, "[n]o actresses of mimes shall wear gems, none shall wear silk adorned with figures or gilded textiles."[838] Elsewhere behavioural conventions surrounding objects and materials were more associated with ingrained social mores; see for example the story from the *Life of Porphyry* where the sacred stones of the temple of Zeus Marnas in late antique Gaza are reused as paving stones. Despite the intention behind this action being the desecration of the stones that were forbidden to be walked upon, the inhabitants of the city continued to avoid them when passing along the street.[839] The exhibition of such behaviours, either imperially sanctioned or reflecting more broad cultural trends and values, suggests that there were also other more informal proscriptions for material culture more broadly within society which we may be unaware of today. Furthermore, these controls suggest that the treatment of materials was directly related to their meanings – the extract regarding clothing from the Theodosian Code is essentially prohibiting the wearing of elite goods by lower class or improper individuals, thereby sustaining the meaning and value of the objects. Similarly, the movement of the sacred stones from the temple to the street where they can be walked upon is an attempt, through behaviours surrounding these objects, to change or destroy the meaning inherent within them. All of this underlines the fact that in Late Antiquity materials and their meanings could provide a basis for power. The adherence to social conventions surrounding the use of objects, for example in gift giving, can represent the acknowledgement of the power of objects more broadly in society.

[837] Geary (1986) 178.
[838] *Cod. Theod.* 15.7.11; trans. Pharr (1952).
[839] Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 76; trans. Hill (1913).

Finally, this thesis has also shown that gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs can all enact certain behaviours within late antique society, and move between places and people to create meaning. Such movement works to enhance their specific biographies. The letters of Late Antiquity in particular demonstrate a regular movement of material between people separated by distance. The movement of baskets between the monastery in which they were made and the outside world also represents a means of communication and the creation of meaning. Thus movement of objects signifies both a means to accumulate meaning and memories, but also a method to communicate this to others. By taking this perspective to examples of domestic objects, it becomes clear that meaning was created, sustained and understood in a physical sense through the interactions between owner and object. The consequence of this is that material culture can be understood as having no meaning independently of action; it requires involvement within movements and behaviours in order to accumulate significance. Thus to undertake research on late antique material culture is to also study the personal and cultural behaviours of the owners, and other people associated with these objects through their biographies. As such, the movement of objects actually represents more than the simple accumulation and communication of meaning. The transmission of material culture built and maintained human relationships, evoked the ancestry and heritage of individuals, and reinforced and reflected personal identity, and more broadly cultural values. It thus actively helped to cement late antique society.

The Multiplicity of Meaningful Objects: gift, heirloom, or souvenir?

This thesis has clearly demonstrated that objects in late antique society held a number of different meanings, both personal and cultural, that could exist simultaneously or consecutively over the life span of the object.

For example, the necklace given to Maria by Honorius before their wedding was an heirloom object, which then became a gift upon its movement from the emperor to his wife-to-be. The Dea Nutrix figurine was originally an object with a level of religious meaning that accumulated heirloom status over time. The contorniate medallions commemorating events at the Hippodrome function as both gifts and souvenirs, as do some examples of consular diptychs. The baskets made

by the Egyptian monks at Thebes similarly represent a number of simultaneous meanings. Their functional purpose coexists alongside their status as religious *eulogiae*. As these objects move between contexts, they transition between roles as commodities and symbolic possessions. This is in addition to the cultural connotations of femininity, fertility or pagan cultic activities in wider society. Furthermore the meanings they embody differ from individual to individual; for the early Christian monks, the significance of the basket is different than for the person who buys it in the local market.[840] Meaning is therefore manifold and subjective. This is something referred to by Török in his discussion of pagan and Christian images. He explains that certain images, such as the Isis suckling Horus, can have both pagan and Christian readings within late antique Egypt, as this specific figure is also associated with the figure of *Maria lactans*.[841] Pertinent for this discussion, he states that the interpretation depends upon the viewer, as the image is ambiguous and thus reliant upon the knowledge and belief systems brought to the object. This thesis has also demonstrated that the same is true for the understanding of meanings within objects, both personal and cultural. The meanings and values embodied by examples of domestic material culture depend upon the understanding of the object's biography by the person experiencing it. As such, objects can be understood to have layers of meaning that refer to specific places, people, and occasions, as well as broader cultural assignations. An acknowledgement of this therefore suggests that, to a certain extent, our terminology for identifying objects is somewhat artificial and represents unnatural divisions between these layers of accumulated meanings.

Labels such as souvenir or gift rather represent a value judgement outlining what 'we' consider the most important aspect of an object's biography to be. The same can be said for the information we gain from primary sources of evidence. The biographical aspects emphasised within texts, through the material nature of the object, or the context in which the item was found represents only one moment in the biography of an object, or emphasises the aspect that the maker or owner thought to be most important. Such labels reflect a particular moment in time and can ignore the full life of objects and the various meanings that they can embody. Of course, the focus on certain features of an object's biography can itself communicate a lot about the contexts that were considered

[840] See discussion in chapter 6, sections III & IV.
[841] Török (2005) 272.

important, and how specific items of material culture were employed within late antique life. However, as this thesis has shown, to acknowledge only these single meanings and values is to ignore the way in which objects moved, transformed, and became integrated into life in Late Antiquity.

RECONSTRUCTION OF A LATE ANTIQUE HOME

This thesis has revealed the place and meaning of personal possessions within the late antique home. However the nature of scholarship means that they are still often discussed in a manner divorced from their everyday context. It therefore seems suitable to conclude this thesis by returning these objects to their domestic environment. The purpose of this reconstruction is to apply the knowledge gained during the course of this thesis, in order to populate an imaginary late antique home with meaning-laden personal objects.

Of course, the nature of the evidence means that a precise model based in a specific location at a certain time cannot be produced. The evidence collated and discussed within this thesis has been necessarily broad to provide an overview and introduction to such an area of scholarship. Further work would be needed to provide a specific reconstruction in terms of date, geographical region, and economic status. However, as a first step in broadly reconstructing the more personal lives of domestic objects, the approach taken in this thesis nevertheless contributes to an enlightening and alternative model for the kinds of objects that would be within houses, and the interactions between people, their domestic space, and possessions.

The following reconstruction draws on the trends in terms of movement, use and meaning of material culture that have been identified within this research. However, to give the reconstruction some parameters, the following vignette broadly draws on evidence from the fourth to fifth centuries AD. Furthermore, the house represents the home of a lower to middling class of inhabitant – the kind who would be clients rather than patrons within late antique society – and thus provides a much-needed departure in emphasis away from the elites and their material culture. The scene is related from the point of view of a married woman. Regarding location, the interior space

has been very loosely based on the homes excavated in Karanis, Egypt, and many of the choices in terms of domestic material culture reflects this general location.[842]

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Above the doorway to the home, a small clay *ampulla* is suspended from a hook mounted into the surround, ensuring all inhabitants and visitors pass close by to it when entering. The flask contains oil collected from the Shrine of Saint Menas, near Alexandria, but the contents are invisible from the exterior. The vessel depicts the saint in the *orans* pose, and is recognisable to all those who admire the flask and inevitably ask the homeowners about their presumed pilgrimage to the site. Often visitors touch it, hoping to gain a blessing or protection from sacred contents. Inside the house there is a niche built into the wall, which would once have held the figurines of the household gods, but now only features a terracotta figure of Isis nursing Harpocrates. It is displayed mainly as decoration, and because it was in the house when the wife moved in with her husband; it has always been there and she is unsure of how old it must be. Her husband seems fond of it though.

The home is relatively small, consisting only of two rooms and a small cellar used for the storage of a range of household equipment. This area contains an eclectic mix of dining-wares; some are of local production and fairly non-descript, however there is also some glass and a couple of silver vessels. A moulded glass bottle, in the form of a Bacchic head, sits on a shelf and contains fish sauce. It originally came from Alexandria and contained wine – whenever the woman holds the vessel it reminds her of the rare trip she took - however now she takes it into her local *garum* seller to be refilled as necessary. The storage area also has several pots on the floor, one of which is visibly older than the others. When filled with dried lupines, the pot is difficult to move and represents an object both static yet in constant use within the home.[843] Several miles away, the couple's daughter is in her new marital home. At this very moment, she is eating lupines bought from a stall on her way home from the market.[844] The taste of the cheap but filling street-food

[842] Gazda & Royer (1983) 19-31.
[843] The seeds of a variety of lupine could be cooked and eaten, usually by the poorer classes, along with a variety of other legumes; see Bagnall (1993) 26. They are also attested within the papyri, for example the late second-century account, P.Mich.18.786
[844] Such a stall is described in the Leontius of Neapolis's sixth-century *Life of Symeon the Fool* 4.146; trans. Krueger (1996).

reminds her of her mother and the storage pot that was such a feature of her upbringing, and she resolves to send greetings in a letter.

Her mother and father already have several letters from their daughter, as well as sent by their son in the army prior to his death two years ago. They are kept in a terracotta pot with other key documents relating to the father's labouring contract and the rental of their house. There are also some old accounts from the husband's father, one of which has been reused on the reverse. Nearby, kept safely within a locked cupboard is a wooden box containing some of the wife's jewellery – one gold necklace is clearly old-fashioned in style and features a coin with a handsome portrait of an emperor now long dead. The clasp is broken. Some loose engraved gemstones, once set into rings, sit in the bottom of the casket along with a pair of pendant earrings that belonged to the woman's mother and formed part of her dowry.[845] This casket is rarely opened and has a layer of dust covering its lid. The hairpins and small items of jewellery that the wife has in current usage are in contrast kept within a carved bone box, or *pyxis,* which is decorated with a scene from the story of the Judgement of Paris, and was given to her as a gift at her wedding by one of her cousins.[846] To be honest, the wife does not really like her cousin – he owes her money – and as such feels rather indifferent to the object itself. However, it functions well enough and is quite attractive, and so remains in use.

At the back of the main room is the wife's wool-working equipment, including a *kalathos* style basket containing a spindle and distaff. She has recently finished weaving a cloak for her husband, which he put on this morning as he left. A large chest on which the wool basket sits contains further textiles – most prized are some high quality linens which her son brought back from Palestine as a gift after a tour with the army. Their foreign appearance fills her with admiration for her son, for travelling so far, but also sadness as she is reminded of her loss.

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[845] P.Princ. II 95.
[846] Similar to that in fig. 63. See also the discussion of wedding iconography in chapter 4, section II.1.

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study reveals that there is plenty more work that can be done in the future, to increase our understanding of late antique gifts, heirlooms, and souvenirs, as well as the role of meaningful possessions more broadly.

The potential for further examination of heirlooms could be conducted through consideration of textual and archaeological sources that were beyond the scope of this thesis – in particular an analysis of legal texts outside of Egypt. A systematic investigation of archaeological evidence within reports and catalogues to identify further examples of heirloom objects would also be fruitful. Such work would also involve the evaluation and potential reinterpretation of existing heirlooms. This present study has shown that in reports and other secondary sources, the description of 'heirloom' is sometimes given without further qualification of exactly what is meant – there is not always a distinction made between objects of age and possessions specifically associated with family curation.[847] As such, the waters are somewhat muddy in terms of identifications in secondary sources. A re-evaluation of such work, using the definition and understanding provided within the theoretical chapter of this thesis would provide potentially new evidence with which the present study could be compared and expanded, in order to gain new information and further strengthen and develop preliminary conclusions made here.

Beyond this, the topic of souvenirs would also provide a fruitful target for additional research. Certainly, there is plenty of material that could be fruitfully discussed in comparison to the evidence collated here, ideally in the form of Jewish pilgrim souvenirs and an extended range of secular material. The issues surrounding identification of souvenir objects within the archaeological evidence could also be addressed in future studies. Often it can be difficult to distinguish between imported goods and the presence of souvenirs in the form of the 'samples' of regional material culture that Stewart describes. Liebeschuetz describes how during Late Antiquity there was a reduction in long-distance trade, meaning that provincial areas became self sufficient in main commodities, and there were changes in trade patterns more broadly.[848] A study based upon

[847] See, for example, the otherwise excellent Stirling (2005).
[848] Liebeschuetz (1992) 11.

these changes and the evidence in the archaeological record of supposedly foreign objects could help to enlighten this topic and produce fresh evidence for the presence of souvenir objects, and the relationship between their origin and findspot.

The evidence relating to the material culture of early Christian monasteries also provides a good basis for further work. The focus of the discussions in chapter 6 could easily be expanded to incorporate considerations of other manufactured objects, and evidence from other monastic sites – for example in this work nets, mats, and leatherwork have already been referred to. The meanings of these objects in relation to the thematic discussions here could provide interesting comparisons. Whilst monastic daily life is unique it must be remembered that nonetheless entailed a kind of domestic culture; thus it would be useful to compare to evidence from mainstream society relating to the production and use of objects in the home. Lastly, baskets as cultural and religious artefacts could also be further considered beyond Christianity. Juvenal in the first to second centuries AD associates the *kophinos* basket with the travelling equipment of Jews in Italy.[849] There are also Talmudic rules relating to the production and treatment of baskets.[850] Therefore study could be undertaken to define whether there were specifically Jewish cultural values for these objects in the late antique period, potentially revealing more about the role of these undervalued objects in society more broadly.

[849] Juvenal, *Satires* 3.14; trans. Ramsay (1928).
[850] See Sperber (1976) 130-132 for more.

APPENDIX

List of objects referred to in this thesis by material

Object	Material	Thesis page
Plaited basket from Qasr Ibrim, Egypt	Basketry	165
Basket from Monastery of Epiphanius	Basketry – palm leaf	176
Waterlogged basket from Oxfordshire	Basketry – willow	165
Miniature Tyche of Antioch, Louvre	Bronze	128
Contorniate medallion showing the abduction of the Sabine Women	Bronze	139
The Rudge Cup	Bronze, enamel	124
Steelyard weight in shape of empress	Bronze, lead	46
Drinking cups from Chaourse Treasure	Bronze, silver	48
Nene Valley beaker from Eastern Cemetery London	Ceramic	61
Cologne coated-ware beaker from Eastern Cemetery London	Ceramic	61
O.Florida 14 (letter discussing the making of a basket)	Ceramic	108
Dea Nutrix figurine, Baldock	Ceramic - pipeclay	60
Globular handled vessel	Ceramic - terracotta	92
Artemis Ephesia statuette	Ceramic - terracotta	141
Saint Symeon pilgrim token	Ceramic - terracotts	147
Menas *ampulla*	Ceramic - terracotta	149
Pilgrim token showing Annunciation	Ceramic - terracotta	169
Lamp decorated with menorah	Ceramic - terracotta	45
Statuette of Isis nursing Harpocrates	Ceramic - terracotta	171
Apotropaic tag from *domus* at Butrint	Copper	49
Canopic cakes (in SB 8.9746 = SB 3.7243)	Food	135
Triptolemus gem	Gem - glass paste	170
Intaglio of grazing bull from Eastern Cemetery London	Gem - chalcedony	70
Engraved bowl from Krefeld-Gellep	Glass	56
Cage Cup from Cologne	Glass	56
Globular handled jug	Glass	92
Shallow circular dish	Glass	98
Tyche of Antioch bottle	Glass	128
Populonia flask	Glass	128
Prague flask	Glass	129

Pharos bottle, Ptuj	Glass	130
Beaker decorated with charioteer	Glass	139
Jar with Jewish symbols	Glass	143
Pilgrim jug with crucifix decoration	Glass	151
Medallion depicting woman and child	Glass, gold.	97
Remains of vessel with gold decorated base	Glass, gold.	98
Vessel base depicting Orfitus and Constantius	Glass, gold.	96
Vessel base depicting charioteer	Glass, gold	139
Vessel base depicting gladiator	Glass, gold	139
Vessel base reading 'Happy New Year'	Glass, gold	140
Vessel base depicting *toga virilise* ceremony	Glass, gold	140
Bottle wrapped with basketry	Glass, palm	164
'Iuliana' bracelet from Hoxne Treasure	Gold	49
Torc pendant with Annunciation scene	Gold	64
Finger ring set with coin	Gold	67
Necklace set with coins from Abuqir	Gold	67
Mounted *aureus* of Trajan	Gold	69
Necklace set with coin from Netherlands	Gold	67
Marriage belt	Gold	95
Ring with couple's heads in profile	Gold	96
Constatine medallion, Beaurains Hoard	Gold	101
Finger ring with coin of Diocletian	Gold	103
Finger ring with carnelian intaglio of Nemesis, from Xanten	Gold, gem	70
Ring depicting clasped hands	Gold, gem	95
Maniaces necklace (in P.Oxy.10.1273)	Gold, gem	63
Hoxne body chain	Gold, gem	66
Five rings set with intaglios from Thetford Treasure	Gold, gem	69
Pendant from grave at Pessinus	Gold, silver	67
Woven mat, Egypt	Grass or reeds	164
Pyxis decorated with Judgement of Paris	Ivory	55
Plaque depicting St Peter	Ivory	45
Comb with name Modestina	Ivory	49
Clementinus diptych	Ivory	104
Pyxis depicting St Menas	Ivory	165
Bundle of palm strips	Palm leaf	176
5 strand plait	Palm leaf	176
Dioscorus' Archive	Papyri	74

Sel.Pap. 2.278 (Report of theft of jewellery)	Papyrus	63
P.Oxy.10.1273 (marriage contract)	Papyrus	63
P.Princ. 2.95 (Claim for dead daughter's stolen property)	Papyrus	65
P.Oxy.14.1645 (receipt for personal effects)	Papyrus	72
P.Col.7.188 (Centurion's Will)	Papyrus	72
P.Oxy.6.929. (Letter of Nicanor)	Papyrus	75
SB 14.12077 (Note accompanying flagon of wine)	Papyrus	92
P.Cair.Masp.2.67179 (Dioscoros' epithalamium poem)	Papyrus	92
SB 18.13762 (Letter mentioning omphalos bottle)	Papyrus	93
P.Flor.3.332 (letter mentioning return wedding gifts)	Papyrus	93
P.Ryl.627 (Theophanes Archive)	Papyrus	127
SB 20.14226 (letter requesting leg ornaments)	Papyrus	99
P Oxy.16.1872 (letter to customs house accompanied by gift).	Papyrus	104
P.Oxy.31.2599 (letter discussing making of face cloths)	Papyrus	105
SB 14.11881 (letter discussing the spinning of tow)	Papyrus	105
P.Oxy. 56.3860 (letter discussing cloak making)	Papyrus	106
SB 16.12694 (letter requesting the making of a cloak)	Papyrus	106
SB 20.14226 (Letter requesting the making of a himation)	Papyrus	106
P.Oxy.7.1069 (letter requesting the making of a tunic)	Papyrus	106
P.Col.10.290 (letter discussing the sending and receiving of objects)	Papyrus	111
P.Oxy.6.963 (letter from Ophelia)	Papyrus	111
P.Oxy. 56.3860 (letter requesting visit from relatives)	Papyrus	112
P.Benaki 4 (letter to man in monastic community)	Papyrus	112
SB 22.15453 (letter between Sarapios and Ammonios)	Papyrus	112
P.Mich.8.465 (letter about sending Tyrian wares)	Papyrus	112
P.Oxy. 36.2782 (letter discussing temple rituals)	Papyrus	170
P.Mich.Copt.8 (letter requesting foot washing water)	Papyrus	188
Vienna Dioscorides	Parchment	100
Sevso Hunting Plate	Silver	57
Projecta Casket	Silver	57
Pelegrina Ewer	Silver	58
Missorium of Theodosius	Silver	101
Bowl commemorating Emperors Crispus and Constantine II	Silver	102
Platter 74, Kaiseraugst Treasure	Silver	103

Platter 75, Kaiseraugst Treasure	Silver	103
Vicarello Goblets	Silver	124
Otañes dish	Silver	130
Pilgrim Flask 1 from Monza	Silver	150
Graincourt dish	Silver	173
Tyche of Antioch furniture mount, Esquiline Treasure	Silver	128
Relief of baskets, Sens	Stone	173
Grave stela of Regina	Stone	169
Europa figurine, Panayia Domus	Stone - marble	59
Head of Pan, Panayia Domus	Stone - marble	59
Lullingstone Villa portrait busts	Stone - marble	60
Torre Nova sarcophagus	Stone - marble	170
Lovatelli urn	Stone - marble	170
Fayum Mummy portrait	Wood, encaustic	64
Sancta Sanctorum reliquary box	Wood, stones/earth	146
Skinepeous linens (in P.Princ.2.82)	Textile	135
Wall hanging decorated with basket	Textile	166
Resist dye burial cloth depicting Annunciation	Textile - linen	169
Hanging of bird and basket	Textile - wool	172
Woven hanging with Dionysiac figures	Textile - wool	133
Rug with apotropaic Hercules knot design	Textile - wool	50

ABBREVIATIONS

ANF – A. Roberts & J. Donaldson, eds (1951-56) *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature).

AP – *Apopthegmata Patrum,* The Alphabetical Collection

AP Sys – *Apophthegmata Patrum,* The Greek Systematic Collection

CCSL – (1954 -) *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols)

CSEL – (1866 -) *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: Akademie Verlag)

Dig. Jus – Digest of Justinian

Edict Dioc. – Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices.

Hist. Laus. – Palladius, *The Lausiac History*.

ILS – *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer)

LCL – Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge. Mass: Harvard University Press)

NPNF – P. Schaff, *et al.,* eds (1886 -) *A Select Library of the Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature).

PL – J.-P. Migne, ed. (1857-66) *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*

PG – J.-P. Migne, ed. (1844-55) *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* (Paris: Migne).

SHA – *Scriptores Historia Augustae*

SC – Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf).

VP – *Vitae Patrum*

Other abbreviations follow the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: The Rudge Cup (replica), second century AD, electrotype copy (original is bronze, now in Alnick Castle as the property of the Duke of Northumberland), British Museum P&EE 1864 10-7 1. [Photo: © British Museum].

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